

University of California, Los Angeles Graduate Student Association Forum #6, Winter Quarter, Wednesday, March 3, 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

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA VP of Internal Affairs and Forum Chair)

5:40-5:50 Updates from GSA Leadership

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA VP of Internal Affairs and Forum Chair)
and Letty Treviño (GSA VP of Academic Affairs)

5:50-6:05 Reopening In-Person Research

Tyler Broan (Arts & Architecture Council Secretary, Treasurer, and Forum Representative)

6:05-6:55 GSA Fee Referenda*

JP Santos (GSA President)

6:55-7:00 Constitutional Changes to GSA (UCGPC)*

JP Santos

7:00-7:15 GSA Support of Assemblymember Kamlager's PEACE Act*

Neda Ashtari (GSA VP of External Affairs)

7:15-7:30 GSA Resolution on Service*

Akash Deep Singh (GSA Elections Commissioner)

7:30 Adjournment

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA VP of Internal Affairs and Forum Chair)

LETTING PEOPLE INTO THE MEETING--5:30

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

Musibau Francis Jimoh (GSA Vice President of Internal Affairs)

- Make sure to fill out the sign in sheet and include your email address→ this is how you will get the Amazon gift card. We will still email the claim codes when we receive them even if it is not tonight.
- This is the last Forum meeting before the [GSA General Elections](#) (vote via MyUCLA between April 6th at 12pm PT and April 12th at 12pm PT)
- Educators are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, so if you are eligible, make sure to go to [California's My Turn website](#) to find an appointment
- Here are some updates on what we have been working on in the GSA VPI Office:
 - We have advocated and been able to get a rent-freeze on student for AY 2020-2021
 - Transportation:
 - We requested and worked with UCLA Transportation and Housing departments to move Bruin Bikes to University South Apartments fare-free. Graduate and professional students as well as their families have been using these bikes.
 - Metro monorail and heavy rail project→ working with other stakeholders on getting a stop at Westwood (we have a lot of students commuting from the valley)
 - Council Meetings
 - Working on strengthening and supporting councils so we can have a more engaging and strong GSA
 - Meeting with Council presidents to ensure that moving forward, council elections are held in the spring quarter so as to remove the gap in continuity that has characterized past transitions.
 - GSRC Oversight Committee
 - Working on institutionalization and continuity.
 - Wescom/GSA COVID-19 Relief Program
 - Meals will be provided to students living in Westwood and gift cards will be provided to students living in other areas (thanks to ASUCLA and ResLife)

UPDATES FROM GSA LEADERSHIP--5:40

Letty Treviño (GSA VP of Academic Affairs)

- Academic Policy
 - Proposing elimination of GRE to graduate council and it has created a lot of debate
 - They have asked us to create a document explaining why the GRE is discriminatory in the way it is used and how it could be used more equitably if departments don't want to eliminate it
 - In April we will be proposing the elimination of incomplete notation on transcripts
 - Currently, there is no way to remove this from your transcript even after you complete the coursework and we find that this is discriminatory because it is used to flag students with disabilities→ we are very hopeful that it will pass
 - Dean Ettner will be hiring a graduate student to help graduate programs fill out applications so they qualify for CalFresh benefits and graduate students can more easily receive this assistance
 - Goal: have all of the programs applications filled out by the end of this school year (end of June)
 - GSA publications
 - Applications are open!
 - Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week (April 5th-9th)
 - GSA will be hosting three events: Speed friending, game night, and Melnitz will be hosting a night
 - Give aways at each of these→ people who are not currently in the US can participate and receive gift cards (this is made possible through re-allocation of GSA Central Office's discretionary funds)
- Stay updated on the GSA Office of Academic Affairs' projects:
 - For Academic Policy Updates please read the GSA Report (sent out every two weeks through the GSA newsletter).
 - To learn more about our CalFresh Initiative please reach out to Isabel Benvenuti, Director of Academic Senate (das@gsa.asucla.ucla.edu).
 - For GSA Publications funding please go to our website (<http://gsa.asucla.ucla.edu/publications.html>). Application Deadline is March 17th.
 - Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week is April 5-9th. If you have an event that you are hosting during that week and would like to be added to the campus-wide calendar of events for that week submit here: If you still plan to host an event/s, please fill out this form with your event details by Friday, March 5th: <https://forms.gle/aCrotu8itdCJ7Y6B6>

REOPENING IN-PERSON RESEARCH--5:50

Tyler Brown (Arts & Architecture Council Secretary, Treasurer, and Forum Representative)

- We are thinking about taking collective action to get spaces on campus to conduct research and work on campus and wanted to speak with other councils to see what reopening has looked like in their departments. Has this been initiated and if not what are people's thoughts on taking collective action?

Question from Amira: What are some of the concrete actions that your department took? Are you putting forward some sort of resolution?

Response from Tyler: We submitted a document responding to the county guidelines. This changed on Feb 28th, to say that in-person research can reconvene. Departments now have to submit reopening plans. The university then signs off on that. So, the university can no longer use county guidelines to prevent access to our campus workspaces.

Comment from Alex: I know there is a concern from students in labs and groups that might not be following rules and want a system to be put in place for them to anonymously report concerns.

Response from Tyler: Workspaces won't be open if we don't follow guidelines. There is a communal agreement in our department about this. In-person research is a top priority for the arts and the punitive cost of not resuming it is very high.

Comment from Dean Ettner: Led by the GSA, some of us worked on writing up a process for bringing these types of concerns to higher levels of administration if the PI isn't responsive. It got posted to the VCR's website. There should also be a link to it on the Graduate Division's website. I'll look for it. <https://grad.ucla.edu/gss/library/returntocampusresearchfaq.pdf>

Comment from JP: Yes, I was going to say the same thing as Susan. <https://ucla.app.box.com/v/UCLA-Grad-Postdocs-FAQs>. VC Beck, could you speak about this?

Response from VC Beck: I think your advice and articulation of the problem is correct. If your department is not working on reopening campus workspaces, they should be. We're very excited about resuming research activity safely on campus. We're hoping to bring all of the graduate students back on campus in the not too distant future.

Response from Tyler: Yeah, if I can piggyback off of that, the conversation about reconvening research on campus should be happening. Use your voice as graduate students.

Response from VC Beck: There should be more information on reopening in the next few days.

GSA FEE REFERENDA*--6:05

JP Santos (GSA President) [[link to JP's presentation](#)]

- I want to spend some time making sure that the Forum understands GSA's dire financial situation and that we can have an honest discussion about it.
- Reminder: the vote tonight is to put is referendum on the ballot to let our fellow graduate and professional students decide if they want to adopt it or not
- GSA's organization:
 - GSA is made up of the GSA Central Office (elected representatives and the people in their offices as well as committees) and Academic Councils (local GSA branches that provide programming to a local constituency)
- GSA budget is decided by GSA President and IVP as well as by the Forum
 - Bulk of the budget is from GSA membership fees
 - ASUCLA interaction fund (\$50,000-60,000) that must be spent only on graduate events (Melnitz movies, graduate events, and elections)
 - Student Advisory Committee (SFAC) money that must go to GSA publications and discretionary funds
- Where do GSA Membership Fees go?
 - Total: \$12.75 per quarter and \$19.14 per semester
 - Council fees: \$5.50 per quarter per student
 - Central Office fees: \$7.25 per quarter (used for programming, services, and advocacy for all of the graduate students)
- Our fees are not tied to inflation
 - We have bills to pay no matter what each year ex. facilities→ our spending power is decreasing by \$13,000 per year (about the cost of one gradbar event or two director salaries)
 - Based on the feedback we received during the last Forum meeting, we want to keep costs low→ we want to increase just the Central Office fees to keep the cost of new fees down
 - We are proposing only what is necessary to keep GSA afloat and regain the spending power we had in 2000
 - Total increase: \$5.01 per quarter or \$7.53 per semester

- We would gain about \$85,000 if this were to be put on the ballot and graduate students voted to adopt it
- What a bigger budget can do:
 - More graduate student events
 - More investment in GSA elections
 - Increased advocacy
 - Staffing UCLA better
 - More investment in Orientation

Comment from Letty: A vote in favor allows this referendum to be placed on the GSA election ballot. A vote opposed means this referendum will not be placed on the ballot. It's important to let our graduate student body vote on the proposed referendum.

Comment from Francis: Also keep in mind that Grad Bar will be in-person next year and can use more funds.

Question from Shoshana: It's obvious that GSA needs more support. Can we get it from a source that is not the students? Is this sustainable in the long term? Students are already angry over the fees they've had to pay this year. We need to make it very clear to students why we are adding more.

Response from JP: I share your opinion. We were able to lobby SFAC and ASUCLA to allow us to use their money to pay for the directors salaries who plan events.

Comment from Roy: Consider the independence of your voice and the value of that to your organization. This is a model that is present in all governments and is not outside of the norm. Also, this is a pretty modest change.

Comment from JP: the undergrad government quarter fee is \$90/quarter. Ours is \$12.75/quarter.

Comment from Letty: We've asked Graduate Division to hire more graduate student workers. They've increased positions within their teams. So they too have helped us in that way. We also lobbied Student Affairs for more financial support and the Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week this year has a greater budget this year than last year.

Comment from Vera: It would be nice to increase both the GSA central fee and the councils fee and tie them both to inflation.

Comment from Francis: Vera, that was the initial plan but we are concerned that will be too much on grad students. Also, the mood during last forum meeting made this difficult to sell

Question from Amira: Vera, could you please explain what you mean by councils fees?

Response from Vera: Like the fee has two parts, one goes to GSA central and one goes to councils like JP explained in his presentation. The referendum proposed only asks for an increase in funding for the GSA central office. So GSA can keep their budget but councils will keep losing money every year to the inflation. I disagree with that.

Response from JP: Vera, the important thing to note is that council's don't have these overhead costs that GSA central office does as Roy is explaining. Council budgets don't have recurring costs, so you're not losing money every year whereas GSA has overhead/recurring costs that we are obligated to pay that increase to inflation.

Response from Vera: We still organize events and pay for things which do increase in pricing every year due to inflation. So every year, just like GSA, we will be able to afford less due to our fees not being tied to inflation.

Comment from JP: Vera, sure, but I think if we decide to put this on the ballot, and students say yes, we can always augment council budgets somehow

Question from Mike: I just want to make sure that everyone understands what they are doing in terms of this referendum. JP and your GSA leadership has been doing everything they should be doing. UCOP needs to approve any fee referenda put on the ballot on UC campuses and they will give the final approval with the Chancellor of our campus and agree on the necessary voter turnout. They could slightly change the wording or shut it down (though this is unlikely). For all the fee referenda for the last 10 year, including this one, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the fee brought in goes into RTA (return to aid) directly to financial aid for graduate students.

Question from Roy: Any of the changes Mike referenced would likely be minor and you could choose not to put the final version of the referendum on the ballot if you want. Is that right Mike?

Response from Mike: That usually doesn't happen because there is not enough time. I mean, this is the last meeting of the Forum before the election so what will likely happen from here if you vote to add it to the ballot is that it will be approved by the process I referenced and then

Francis will send the final version out to the members of the Forum and ask if there are any objections. The Chancellor's office and UCOP would never increase the ask. If anything they might try to point out areas where it could be reduced.

Question from Roy: Some of the expenses of GSA born by the Central Office and not the Academic Councils are the overhead like accounting, for example. Your bank accounts are independent from university bank accounts. You pay to maintain the space in Kerckhoff. This is all paid by the GSA Central Office. The Central Office also pays the salaries of directors as has been mentioned.

Question from Alex: Is slide 9 the wording for the referendum?

Response from JP: Yes.

Response from Francis: You can find the referendum in the supporting documents folder.

Comment from Alex: it is important to mention that turnout will be important at the elections to give people a chance to vote on this, so I want to push for GSA to and the Academic Councils to make sure that constituents know about this referendum and that they should be voting on it.

Comment from Mike: I just want to say, Alex turnout is important, but I want to point out that we, as the ex-officio members of the Forum, can't urge people to vote because of the referendum.

Comment from Akash: We need at least 10% of the total graduate student body to vote during the elections.

Question from Jacob: the former GSA finance director was in my department and she says that she said there were massive surpluses in all areas last year. This also makes me question the inflation argument. Also, why are so many members of UCLA administration here and pushing for this referendum? I don't want to be cynical but they are the main voices in this meeting. I am also very concerned about the possibility that some bureaucrat might change the language of our referendum and we wouldn't have the chance to vote on it. Finally, I want to address the engagement issue: people don't vote. Our councils are the most engaged in GSA and those of use here have a duty to represent our councils. Personally, I don't feel that I have enough information to speak on behalf of my council on this issue today. I want to propose that JP provide budgets going 5 years back and a comprehensive proposal for how he would use these

funds. I motion to table this vote until we have had a chance to bring this to our council members.

Question from Shoshana: What is the timeline? When could it get voted on if not at this election?

Response from Francis: If we table it, we likely won't be able to get it on the ballot for the election. If not at this election, it would be another year. The only other option would be to have an emergency meeting before the election this year.

Comment from Letty: Emergency Forum Meetings (GSA Codes)

3.4.3.1 Emergency meetings may be called by: (a) three (3) officers; (b) one-half of the Designated Forum Delegates; (c) two-sevenths of the Designated Assembly Representatives; or (d) two-tenths of one percent (.2%) of the graduate students.

3.4.3.2 Emergency meetings shall only address a single item of business.

3.4.3.3 Emergency meetings shall be held within twenty-four (24) hours of being called.

3.4.3.4 Quorum shall be one more than one-third the number of seated Delegates. Delegates or their Alternates may be counted in determining quorum.

3.4.3.5 Any action taken at an emergency Forum meeting is subject to review at a regularly scheduled or special Forum meeting

Response from Letty: March 21nd is the last day the ballot can be changed. Elections are April 6-12. Spring Quarter Week 3 Forum is April 14th.

Response from JP: Jacob, I would just like to provide a little clarification if I can. Councils have a lot of surplus, but we can't touch council fees. Any surplus the Central Office had last year went to the hardship fund established by my predecessor. Also, the admins are here and talking because they can speak to the history of GSA. They are ex-officio members of the Forum and regularly attend. If you want, the [budgets](#) are on the GSA website.

Comment from Vera: If the GSA Central Office is so low on money, why was the stipend for GSA President increased from 10.9k to 14.5k from 2019-20 to 2020-21? Will you use extra funding to keep increasing officers salaries? Written plan for usage of extra funds would be very great!

Comment from JP: Math and Physical Sciences

Comment From Letty: Math and Physical Sciences

Comment from Vera: That sounds great! I was not here last year so I didn't know the specifics. Thanks for clarifying :)

Comment from Mike: You need to address the motion now to find out if there is a second and then vote on it.

- Motion to vote to table the vote until we have a written plan that is shared with the councils: Jacob Green (SSC) and Amira Hassnaoui (AAC)--Motion passed 10 yes, 7 no, 1 abstain
 - **Vote: APPROVED**

Comment from Letty: Here is the link to the GSA Budgets:

<http://gsa.asucla.ucla.edu/budget.html>

JP, Francis, and I will send y'all the documents by this Friday with the questions y'all have asked today as FAQs. We'll also provide a form where you can add additional questions you or your council may have.

We'll call for an emergency meeting in two weeks so we can do the vote on whether or not to add it to the ballot before the final deadline of March 21st.

Once we send you the documents we recommend immediately forwarding it to your council members and scheduling a meeting for next week so you can get the necessary feedback.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES TO GSA (UCGPC)*--6:59

JP Santos

- All the external VPs of the UC GSAs would get together at UC Students Association (UCSA), but over time graduate student councils have grown closer to the UC Graduate and Professional Council and this amendment to our GSA constitution would make this official.
- This is to get Forum approval to put this measure on the ballot in April

Comment from Mike: I just want to clarify that the passage needs to be 66+1 vote.

- Motion for this referendum to be put on the ballot: Alex (BSC) and Shoshana (ASA)--Motion passed
- Call for a vote. 17 yes, 0 No, 1 Abstain
 - **Vote: APPROVED**

GSA SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLYMEMBER KAMLAGER'S PEACE ACT*--7:05

Letty (presenting on behalf of Neda)

Graduate Student Association Funding Initiative

- Basically you would be voting on whether or not GSA is endorsing this bill.
- Neda has been working with our state legislatures to address concerns in medical fields. When hospitals go out of business, they sell beds and other equipment and enter into a contract with the organizations they sell them to. Religiously-associated hospitals have been limiting the kind of care that can be provided in these contracts. If patients need something that is medically necessary, but violates the contract or what that religious institution has deemed inappropriate for their hospital, that patient would have to not receive the procedure or go somewhere else for it, sometimes one that is far away.
- This bill would help protect the right of every individual to comprehensive medical care by preventing hospitals from writing into contract restrictions based on non-clinical reasoning intended to stop physicians from providing certain types of care to patients.

Question from Amira: This is non discrimination on anything?

Response from Letty: I wouldn't put it that way. It's more about the religious organization.

Comment from Vera: Why do we have to endorse or not endorse this bill as a student association? This seems like a political topic not an internal ucla business? Sorry I might be getting confused.

Response from JP: Yeah it's just a formality Vera to kinda help the lawmakers say that our student body endorses this bill officially. We in the past have support/rejected various political positions before

Response from Letty: It's up to us to decide what we get involved in and this is part of the UCLA system. We are a part of this greater community.

Question from Alex: How does an endorsement differ from a resolution?

Response from Letty: We give our logo to them and they can say that GSA endorses them. An endorsement can be a type of resolution.

Question from Kathleen: Is this related to the petitions that I have seen being circulated about this?

Response from Letty: Yes, this is related. There are conversations like this happening all over the UCs. This movement would be to make this into law so those types of contracts cannot exist.

Question from Amira: I think the work we do to advocate for our community members is so important.

- Motion to vote to support the PEACE act: Amira Hassanaoui (AAC) and Shoshana (ASA)--Motion passed
- Call for a vote. 13 yes, 0 No, 3 Abstain
 - **Vote: APPROVED**

Comment from Akash: Please encourage students within your councils to run for GSA elections. 2/4 positions are running unopposed. The applications close on March 11 (<http://gsa.asucla.ucla.edu/elections.html>).

GSA RESOLUTION ON SERVICE*--7:15

JP Santos

- This is my favorite part of the quarter. I know the pandemic has made things difficult on all levels of this institution. I know we tend to see administrators negatively, but I want to highlight people that have worked so hard and helped GSA. We need to recognize them:
 - Graduate Council Chair and Professor in Bioengineering, Andrea Kasko
 - ASUCLA Board of Directors representative, Steven Moran
 - Biological Sciences GSA Delegate, Alex Chubick
 - SOLE Director, Mike Cohn
 - Administrative Vice Chancellor, Michael Beck
 - Executive Director of CAPS, Nicole Green
 - Senior Director Alumni Career Engagement, Gloria Ko
 - Co-Director of Student Relations, Parth Chauhan
 - Co-Directors of Melnitz Movies, Alexander Moore and Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert
 - GSA Director of Events, Julia Tobin
- Motion to vote on the GSA President Service Resolution: Rami Bata (SBA) and Amira Hassnaoui (AAC)--Motion passed
- Call for a vote. 14 yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain
 - **Vote: APPROVED**

ADJOURNMENT--7:44

Musibau Francis Jimoh

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