

•GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (GSA)•
MEETING MINUTES

July 10, 2014•E.H. Butler Library, Study Quad Room 110A

Welcome: **President Andrea Gustafson** called the meeting to order at 5:30p.m.

First Motion: **President Gustafson** motioned to adopt Robert's Rules of Order (11th edition), for the duration of the meeting. **Vice-President Lanning** seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Second Motion: **President Gustafson** motioned to fill the vacant GSA Treasurer position with an interim Treasurer by Executive Board Appointment and GSA Senate majority approval. During the interim appointment, all efforts will be made by the GSA Executive Board to secure a permanent Treasurer. **Vice-President Lanning** seconded.

Background: **President Gustafson** explains: "James Doran, who was elected to the position of GSA Treasurer, resigned due to the fact that he recently accepted a job in Las Vegas, working for Exceptional Education. This means he can no longer serve because he will not be here for the entire semester. We received notice from Dean Railey that James resigned. The problem is that there is nothing in the Constitution that addresses resignations of officers and what to do afterwards. We held a few emergency E-Board meetings to try to figure out what we could possibly do to resolve the matter. We tried to find a solution within the realm of the Constitution, and which would uphold the things that were already set in motion over the summer."

Discussion:

Senator Kaitlyn Gardner: "I was going to run for the position anyway, and I pulled out. I'd be willing to fill the interim spot and/or the permanent spot depending on what procedure you want to follow."

President Gustafson: "The motion on the table right now is not who to fill it with, but the process itself, because we have no process in position."

Vice-President Lanning: "There is nothing written in our Constitution that addresses this, they left it very vague on purpose, which we know because it is brand new. We were talking about different ways we could get an interim Treasurer in the position. We could throw it back to the student population for a vote, but we did not think that made much sense in a situation like this. We could also do a President appointment, but we agreed that it wouldn't be wise to give so much power to one person. So we thought the Executive Board appointment was a good idea, especially if approved by a simple majority of the Senate. This way, we think, the decision for the appointment is still up to more than one person, but we don't have to involve the entire school population by having another online election."

President Gustafson: "The reason behind the Executive Board picking a nomination and having it approved by the Senate was the idea that if somebody resigned, as opposed to somebody being impeached, you already have 3 other people working as a well-oiled machine; whoever comes in new should be someone who can work well with the rest of us. Therefore, we hope to find people who will complement our work, and we want to be able to say to the Senate that these are the possible candidates to choose from. It's a way to make sure that we are voting on someone who will get along with us, and who can do the job. We want to keep this as seamless as possible, since we spent about a month with James doing things, deciding on the direction we wanted to go in as an E-Board."

Vice-President Lanning: "We had a lot of things in place for the upcoming fall semester, and then he just resigned."

President Gustafson: "If we don't have a Treasurer, which is where we are right now, we cannot release any funds whatsoever in any way."

Vice-President Lanning: "Without a Treasurer we are debilitated, because the Constitution does not have any ways which we could go about to use our funds. There is also no way stipulated in which to replace an officer after they've resigned. This is why we need this motion to pass, so we can start using our funds for the things we need. We called this emergency meeting because we could not wait until October to get things going. We need to work on the Weeks of Welcome, Orientation, etc."

President Gustafson: "We also have people waiting on funds right now, and the scholarship we worked so hard on last year will be useless for this entire semester. That would be \$1,500.00 worth of materials that our graduate students would not be able to get their hands on."

Senator Abreu: "Was that already going into place for this fall or for the spring?"

President Gustafson: "This fall. This motion needs to be passed, but it will not be going into the Constitution, it is not binding, it will not be going into the by-laws. It is a one-time thing to fill this interim position, since we need to be able to utilize our funds. Our hope is that coming into this new legislation when the senators are here, we can work something out that is permanent on the Constitution or the by-laws. We are setting a precedent, but we are not setting anything in stone."

Senator Abreu: "Not a binding precedent."

President Gustafson: "That is correct."

Vice-President Lanning: "We did not want to amend anything that will go on the Constitution forever, since this is just an emergency summer meeting."

Senator Abreu: "I suppose that in the future we should try to amend the Constitution so this doesn't occur again. We just need an added paragraph or two to include a procedure to follow in case of resignations and impeachments. I would also like to know if there is a training period for the person who is going to fill the position. Are they going to speak to Dr. Railey? Is Senator Dinash Lal (GSA Treasurer 2013-2014) going to help them get up to speed?"

Senator Lanning: "James's plan was to stay in the position until he had to leave, and then he wanted to find a replacement himself. That obviously doesn't work, since there is no policy or procedure for that. We didn't think that was fair because of that exact issue, we wanted somebody to have the summer in order to read up and train, so that they would know exactly what they had to do in the fall. So, whoever this person is that is approved by simple majority, they will count with the guidance of Marnie and Dr. Railey, as well as that of Senator Lal."

President Gustafson: "I found that in a 30-minute conversation with Marnie I was able to understand what the position entails. She knows everything about it and how it works. I know she would be willing to sit down with whomever to explain how the job works."

(Voting for Motion #2 ensued. The motion passed unanimously).

Third Motion: President Gustafson motioned to appoint Emmanuel Abreu to the position of Interim Treasurer. **Senator Gardner** seconded.

Background: **President Gustafson** explains: "This has all happened in the last 2 weeks. We have also sped up this process because we have administration on campus that's inviting the GSA to participate in different orientation processes that are going on; that is the first time we've been invited to be a part of anything like this. We see this as another step to develop our image and to validate us as an organization on campus. In light of this, we knew that James was going to have to be replaced by somebody who could work with us and not against us. So we put some feelers out to see if there were people that were willing to take on the position of Interim Treasurer, obviously only until we can make a decision for the permanent Treasurer. Again, just to clarify, this is only an interim position because we feel that we could not make a permanent decision without all the senators present. We have been iffy because it's summer and we only have some of the senators here. Since we are the first people doing this, we want to be very careful with precedents. Like I was saying, we put some feelers out, and I apologize Senator Gardner because I had no idea that you wanted to run as Treasurer. However, we did find a person ourselves, and so I would like to make a motion for that person to be appointed, and then we can have the discussion before it is passed."

Discussion:

Senator Abreu: (Addressing Senator Gardner) "Are you all right with me doing this?"

Senator Gardner: "Yes, that is fine."

Vice-President Lanning: "Great! And like Andrea said before, this is only an interim position. We will continue to look for a permanent Treasurer."

President Gustafson: "That is the idea. In the meantime, we need somebody who is competent, trustworthy, and somebody that we know had some interest in being part of the E-Board. We knew that Manny (Senator Abreu) did but we also knew

that he wasn't going to be with us for the entire year. That is the reason why he didn't run for anything. Does anyone have anything else to discuss pertaining to motion number 3?

(Silence) (Voting for Motion #3 ensued. The motion passed unanimously).

Fourth Motion: Vice-President Lanning motioned to impeach John MacInnes as Senator to the School of the Professions. **President Gustafson** seconded.

Background: **President Gustafson** explains: "There is one person officially that we are missing. If we are interpreting the Constitution correctly, then are we to understand that all of the previous E-Board members become Senators-At-Large?" (There are general nods of agreement).

President Gustafson continues: "Thomas Waters (GSA President 2013-2014), Siraj Bah (GSA Vice-President 2013-2014), and Alexandria Donkor (GSA Secretary 2013-2014) have all graduated, therefore they are not matriculated, which means they are no longer students, and therefore cannot be members of the GSA any longer. Senator Lal is still a member of the GSA, he RSVP'd and said he would be unable to attend this meeting. He has been extremely responsive in everything we have sent out, and he's been a wonderful asset. On the other hand, we do have another Senator who has not responded to anything. I have sent read-receipts and he has read all the emails we sent him, but has failed to respond to any of them. We need to do something about this, precisely because we know how pressed for quorum we are in each of our meetings."

Discussion:

Senator Gardner: "All he had to say was 'I can't come.'"

Senator Sharmin Jimenez: "Was he here at all last year?"

President Gustafson: "He came to one meeting. And we had classes together all the time. After that one meeting he did attend, he hasn't had any communication with us whatsoever."

Senator Abreu: "He came to more than one meeting, maybe three. I remember him being there for the logo meeting."

Senator Gardner: "Yes, he said he wanted to do it, so I didn't. And then he disappeared."

President Gustafson: "Well, I'm passing around now the read-receipt of the email I sent on 6/26 about the continuation of GSA duties over the summer. As you all can see, he read it the same day at 2:30 and yet I received nothing from him. I have contacted him since then and I've received nothing."

Vice-President Lanning: "Just a reminder: in the email that was sent to everybody, it was bolded, underlined, and italicized that failure to respond to this email by the deadline would result in automatic resignation of your position."

President Gustafson: "Seeing as to how we are always dealing with issues of quorum, I would rather have one less person, and not someone who is still there but not there."

Senator Abreu: "The question of quorum aside, I think we were too nice last year in not impeaching when we should have. I'm okay with impeaching just to show that we can, and that we have, and that we've gone through it, especially when it is obviously warranted (like it maybe has been in the past when we haven't done it)."

Vice-President Lanning: "Stipulated in our Constitution are the duties of Senators... 'must maintain a 3.0 GPA, must be available for the duration of the term, and must come to meetings.'"

Senator Abreu: "I think impeaching him makes sense, for a variety of reasons."

President Gustafson: "Yes, and I agree with you that we need to set a precedent. My personal opinion is that communication is of the utmost importance, and if you just send a quick email saying you cannot make a meeting, like Sharmin did last year, for example, then that is fine. We need to send some type of message that we're serious."

Secretary Creech: "What is the procedure if/when we do impeach him. Do we contact him and tell him what has happened?"

President Gustafson: "Yes, I will send him an email."

Senator Jimenez: "Maybe it would be good to have an official document to attach to the email, saying 'You are no longer part of the GSA due to...', like a PDF attachment or something."

President Gustafson: "Then we would need to make a motion for the writing of such a document."

Vice-President Lanning: "I'm fine with just an email coming from the President."

President Gustafson: "Me too."

Secretary Creech: "Another question. Once somebody gets impeached, does that have any bearing whatsoever on their record?"

Vice-President Lanning: "Not really. He will still write on his resume that he was a Senator. So it's more to set a precedent for other people. It's not like it's written anywhere officially that we are Senators."

President Gustafson: "Well, it's on the website (his name). I will talk to Marnie about removing it. There are a lot of things that will change on our website once I finish developing it. We will have a new website for the GSA, which will be accessible from the school's main page. We have been working on it, Stacy has been writing the verbiage, we've all been talking together for the entire summer about what we're going to include in it, and what it's going to be. We will have control of our own website."

Senator Jimenez: "That is so important! Very good idea."

President Gustafson: "All right, do we have anything further to discuss regarding our fourth motion? And I would also like to take another look at the Constitution just to make sure we are doing everything correctly."

(Everyone looks at the document once again) (Voting for Motion #4 ensued. The motion passed unanimously).

New Business:

Vice-President Lanning reminded everyone the vote on the Graduate Student Association fee for \$2.22 is coming up in the fall. Everyone should keep this in mind, and please remind people to vote yes. We also have the election for new Senators. **Senator Abreu** noted that we should touch base with everybody from multidisciplinary who ran for a position, just to remind them that the Senate seats have to be filled. Marnie probably has their names and their contact information. **President Gustafson** pointed out that she is sending out a letter, written by her on behalf of the Executive Board, to the Chairs of all the departments who have graduate programs. The point of the letter is to introduce the GSA and to get them to pass it on to the faculty so they can tell the students about the upcoming election. They will hopefully encourage and motivate students to become interested in being part of the Senate. The President and Vice-President will hand-deliver the letters 2 weeks before the fall semester begins. This letter will include an election packet so that faculty members can choose to give it to students who they think can do a good job. This packet will specify exactly what the position entails and what is expected of elected Senators. The point is to try to get as many people involved as possible. It is important for graduate students to become involved in things on campus. We also would like another space on campus to hold our meetings, because a classroom is not professional enough. Since there are no classes held on campus on Friday afternoon, we were thinking about that room on the third floor of the Classroom Building. **Vice-President Lanning** noted that since we want to get a lot done this year, perhaps it would be a good idea to have 2 shorter meetings per month, instead of 1 long meeting. The idea is to get more done by meeting every other week, check in with people, meet with our committees, etc. **Senator Gardner** observed that having 2 meetings per month would be advantageous in that it would constitute less of a problem if someone were to miss a meeting or two. **Senator Abreu** remarked that the Constitution calls for 3 meetings a semester, and seeing as to how we are already holding more than that amount, perhaps a better online interaction with each other (in the form of chat meetings, for instance) would also work just as well. A monthly online get-together might help things in terms of quorum, since it is likely that more people would be able to "attend." **President Gustafson** said she has absolutely no problem with that. **Vice-President Lanning** suggested that we add that topic of discussion to the list of things we want to go over during our first official meeting in the fall. **Senator Abreu** pointed out that we need to have a faculty advisor, and **President Gustafson** suggested Dr. Andrew Nicholls (Chair of History and Social Science Education Department), since he is devoted to the students of Buffalo State. We need to find out if he is available, but he seems like a good/logical choice, since he is involved with a graduate program. **Senator Abreu** agreed, but

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also expressed that this advisor doesn't necessarily have to be a Chair or even the Coordinator of a graduate program, just as long as they are involved with graduate students.

Adjournment: at 6:22p.m.

Attendance:

Present:

Andrea Gustafson - President
Ashley Lanning - Vice-President
Stacy Creech - Secretary
Emmanuel Abreu - Senator
Kaitlyn Gardner - Senator
Sharmin Jimenez - Senator

Excused:

Dinash Lal - Senator
Dr. Kevin Railey - Administrative Liaison

Absent:

John MacInnes - Senator

Next Meeting: 14 August 2014.