

•GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (GSA)•
MEETING MINUTES
October 03, 2014•Ketchum Hall, Room 219

Welcome: **President Gustafson** called the meeting to order at 5:34p.m.

Adoption of Agenda: The agenda was adopted unanimously.

Remarks of the President: **President Gustafson** read an address, in which she officially welcomed the newly elected Senators, and made reference to the fact that nobody is perfect, and that we should all be open to giving/receiving assistance when necessary. She pointed out as well that with the great deal of work we have ahead of us this year, it would be extremely important to present a unified front, and that it is essential to work diligently and earnestly without placing too much importance on who gets the credit. It was also noted in her speech that "individual commitment to a group effort... is... what makes a team work." She also made allusion to the fact that Buffalo State is currently at a crossroads, since we have a new President, and the school is bustling with new ideas. We need to keep in mind that we work toward a common goal and that we exist to represent/assist the student body. **President Gustafson** concluded her remarks by exhorting the Senators to engage with their constituents, to inquire after their needs and concerns, in order to truly become their representatives.

Remarks of the Administrative Liaison: **Dean Kevin Railey** thanked all the new Senators for running, and congratulated them on being elected. This is his third year with the GSA and it has been an incredible enterprise, with the active participation of dedicated graduate students. He reminded everyone that leadership is a lot about listening, and encouraged the Executive Board and Senators to listen to each other, and to rely on one another as we move forward. He expressed his belief that the role of the GSA is to be the voice of the students, to find as much as possible what they require, and to be their representatives and move forward. He noted that the campus/administration is taking notice of the GSA, and that the school is thrilled that the graduate students have this kind of leadership to speak for them.

Committee Formation:

President Gustafson explained that, according to our Constitution, we have two standing committees: (1) the Student Welfare Committee; and (2) the Budget Allocation and Policy Committee. **Vice-President Lanning** described in detail the inner workings of both committees. After the description was concluded, **President Gustafson** indicated that the Constitution specifies that these committees must be chaired by a Senator, and at this time welcomed nominations for the positions. **Senator Morgera** asked if a chair could recruit any graduate student, who is a

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member of the GSA, to serve on whichever committee. **Vice-President Lanning** replied that this could be done. After some more discussion on the duties and responsibilities that would entail chairing each committee, **Senator Morgera** expressed her interest in becoming the chair of the Student Welfare Committee, and **Senator Yuwar** likewise conveyed his interest in becoming the chair of the Budget Allocation and Policy Committee.

Official Nominations:

- **Senator Sam Yuwar** nominated **Senator Danielle Morgera** to be the chair of the Student Welfare Committee. **Dean Kevin Railey** seconded the nomination. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put the nomination to a vote. The nomination passed unanimously.
- **Senator Danielle Morgera** nominated **Senator Sam Yuwar** to be the chair of the Budget Allocation and Policy Committee. **Dean Kevin Railey** seconded the nomination. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put the nomination to a vote. The nomination passed unanimously.

Charges for the Committees:

- Budget Allocation and Policy Committee (Chair: Senator Sam Yuwar)
 - Establish and write the tenure of Executive Board members and Senators.
 - Review constituent questions and/or concerns regarding funding requests and/or funding decisions made by the Treasurer. This committee will also assist the Treasurer in making any funding decisions when s/he requests their assistance.
- Student Welfare Committee (Chair: Senator Danielle Morgera)
 - Organize and manage GSA social events. The Chair may enlist the help of the Budget Allocation and Policy Committee, other Senators, and/or any other members of the GSA.
 - Conduct research to determine if it is plausible to review the language on the Constitution that only allows the GSA to fund one social even per semester.

Ad Hoc Committees:

- **Vice-President Lanning** described what the functions of ad hoc committees are, and **President Gustafson** expressed the need to create an ad hoc committee to write by-laws that address things like what constitutes an absence vs. an excuse. **Dean Railey** opined that perhaps there was no need to create by-laws, since the Constitution itself is a set of laws and rules. After some pertinent discussion on the topic, it was decided that the issue would be tabled, to be discussed under old business, during the next meeting.
- **President Gustafson** expressed the need to create an ad hoc committee to write the Rules for Replacement, to address the possible resignation of

- a Senator or an Executive Board Member. **Senator Phillips** conveyed a desire to head this ad hoc committee. **Senator Danielle Morgera** nominated **Senator Jaclyn Phillips** to be the chair of the Creation of Rules for Replacement Committee. **Dean Kevin Railey** seconded the nomination. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put the nomination to a vote. The nomination passed unanimously.
- **Vice-President Lanning** made a motion to create an ad hoc committee to handle all social media belonging to the GSA, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. **Secretary Creech** seconded the motion. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and asked if anyone was interested in becoming the chair of this committee. After further dialogue, it was decided that the issue would be tabled, to be discussed under old business, during the next meeting. **Dean Railey** proposed creating a calendar, with his assistant Margaret Letzelter, where the different members of this committee could rotate to post on the different social media websites. Everyone was in agreement that it would be advantageous to pursue this idea.

Old Business:

- **President Gustafson** talked about the Graduate Student Scholarship, and asked for suggestions on how to advertize it to the graduate population. There is a need to let the students know this opportunity exists, and that the GSA would be accepting applications throughout the current Fall 2014 semester. The Graduate Advisory Committee is tasked with making the final decision, to be made public in the following term, during Spring 2015. **Senator McCormick** proposed sending out a mass email message, and **President Gustafson** acquiesced, adding that perhaps an image/flyer would be the best content for this mass email. **Dean Railey** suggested he could work with his assistant to create the text to be added to this flyer. **Senator McCormick** expressed his desire to assist them with this task.
- **President Gustafson** talked briefly about the Graduate Student Commons in the library, and reminded everyone to use the space so we don't lose it.
- **President Gustafson** observed that we need to have a discussion regarding the procedure for funding denials, and suggested that the Budget Allocation and Policy Committee be charged with looking into this matter. There is a need to define this procedure, in terms of who gets notified within the GSA and/or the Graduate School, etc. During the last legislation, the motion that was on the table specified that all denied requests be forwarded to the Dean of the Graduate School. **President Gustafson** opined that that does not help us as a body. While she agreed that the Dean should be notified, as our Administrative Liaison, she proposed that someone within the GSA should also be made aware. **Dean Railey** observed that all denials do come to the

body, since the Treasurer has to make and share reports during each meeting. **Vice-President Lanning** explained the procedure for funding requests, the different criteria for applying for funding, and said that perhaps we need to figure out a procedure to be in place should a student complain if they have been denied funding by the Treasurer. After some discussion, **President Gustafson** asked if this was an issue we wanted to keep on the table, or if it is something to be discussed at a later date. **Senator McCormick** shared his belief that this is something that could be discussed later, since the GSA has only ever denied one funding request, to someone who did not meet the criteria. **President Gustafson** asked if everyone was in agreement to table the issue, and everyone acquiesced.

- **President Gustafson** spoke about faculty evaluations, and of the desire of graduate students to be given the opportunity to evaluate their instructors. **Dean Railey** said student evaluations are supposed to be done in every class, throughout the entire school. These are not monitored closely, however, but motivated by the GSA last year, it was added to the Provost's Agenda. Since it is a requirement, the Administration can implement student evaluations without necessarily having the instructor's permission/knowledge. The conversation right now is gearing toward these evaluations being made available electronically, through Blackboard. The Deans feel, however, that handling this electronically would get a low return. Since graduate students seem to be more motivated, **Dean Railey** opined that perhaps a proposal could be made to speed up the process at the graduate level. At this time, **President Gustafson** asked what could be done about this right now, and **Treasurer Tomion** suggested that we continue this important discussion at a later date. Everyone was in agreement.

New Business:

- **President Gustafson** said that even though we have been running our meetings by Robert's Rules of Order, they still have no official capacity within our governmental structure, and that this should be so, since things run more efficiently this way. Both **President Gustafson** and **Vice-President Lanning** explained Robert's Rules and Parliamentary procedure.
 - **First Motion: Vice-President Lanning** motioned that all GSA meetings henceforth be officially run by Robert's Rules of Order. **Secretary Creech** seconded. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and explained that whenever the GSA, as a governing body, wants to make an amendment to the Constitution, it has to go out to the student population first. After pertinent discussion, she put it to a vote. The motion passed unanimously.
- **President Gustafson** brought up the need, according to the Constitution, to appoint a Faculty Advisor. We went over the sheet describing the preferred

qualifications and duties for the position (refer to 08/21/14 meeting minutes).

- **Second Motion: Treasurer Tomion** moved to approve the criteria specified on the aforementioned sheet. **Secretary Creech** seconded. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put the motion to a vote. The vote passed unanimously. Next, **President Gustafson** urged the Senators to approach members of the faculty who meet the criteria, and it was agreed that the possible candidates for the position would be invited to the next meeting (10/17/14) to introduce themselves and give a short speech. In case they are unable to attend, then the person who is making the nomination can speak on their behalf.
- **Third Motion: Dean Railey** moved that the selection process for the Faculty Advisor consist of three parts: (1) Any member of the GSA Senate may nominate any graduate faculty member to be the Advisor; (2) the nominator or the nominee should be prepared to make the case for why this person is qualified to fill the position; (3) after all the nominations are put forward and spoken about, a vote will be held via secret ballot, and the person with the most votes will be chosen. In the case of a tie, the GSA President chooses the winner. **Treasurer Tomion** seconded the motion. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put it to a vote. The motion passed unanimously.
- **President Gustafson** spoke about the frequency of GSA Senate meetings, stating that during the previous legislation (2013-2014) a need arose to have more than one meeting a month, in order to get more things done. The idea is to have more frequent and shorter meetings, instead of one long meeting per month. **Vice-President Lanning** addressed the fact that if all Committee meetings happen at a different time, then the GSA Senate meetings would be shorter and more efficient. **President Gustafson** said someone suggested we look into real-time meeting spaces online, to consider the possibility of having our second monthly meeting online. As of this moment, however, we are not sure if this is even possible. Perhaps this is something we should research. She asked those present if this is something we would like to look into. **Dean Railey** expressed his belief that, even though having more meetings could certainly be beneficial, the Constitution stipulates that there will only be three meetings per semester, as opposed to six. It is a concern of his that we do not stray too far from the Constitution. **President Gustafson** responded that each of the newly elected Senators was made aware of the fact that there would be six meetings per semester, and that according to the Constitution, the President has the right to call for emergency meetings as well. **Vice-President Lanning** mentioned briefly her past experience as a Senator, and offered that meeting more than once a month is truly the best alternative in order for the body to function well.

Secretary Creech agreed that having a second meeting, in whatever capacity, in order to touch base, is necessary. She said we should inquire into meeting alternatives, like Blackboard or maybe a real-time chat website. **Treasurer Tomion** agreed to explore different possibilities. **Senate Yuwar** suggested we look into conferencing. **Senator Phillips** said she thinks it is very important to meet more than once a month. **Senator McCormick** asked if it was possible to make the second meeting more of a social event, where any member of the GSA could attend. **Vice-President Lanning** said that that would adhere to the spirit of the Constitution, since there are even funds allotted for meetings. She agreed that this was something we should definitely explore.

- Official Nomination: After some more pertinent discussion, **Treasurer Tomion** asked if anyone was willing to chair an ad-hoc committee to explore different meeting alternatives. **Senator Perez** nominated herself to be the chair of the Additional/Alternative Meetings Exploration Committee. **Treasurer Tomion** seconded the nomination. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put the nomination to a vote. The nomination passed unanimously.
- **President Gustafson** spoke next about the process for Treasurer funding requests, explaining that it has been brought to the body's attention that the wording for the funding criteria is somewhat vague. This creates confusion among applicants, which can misconstrue it to mean that they can apply for funding for school supplies, etc. After some pertinent discussion, the body agreed that there are two issues to deal with, in terms of funding denials and funding criteria.
 - **Fourth Motion:** **Vice-President Lanning** motioned that the Budget Allocation and Policy Committee be charged with reviewing constituent questions and/or concerns regarding funding requests and/or funding decisions made by the Treasurer. This committee will also assist the Treasurer in making any funding decisions when s/he requests their assistance. **Treasurer Tomion** seconded the motion. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put it to a vote. The motion passed unanimously.
 - **Fifth Motion:** **Treasurer Tomion** moved to create an ad-hoc committee to revise the funding criteria as it is currently written, and to surmise its purported vagueness. **Secretary Creech** seconded the motion. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and **Senator McCormick** expressed his view that the wording is not precisely vague, and that students should be able to request funding for school supplies/materials. After some pertinent discussion, the motion was put to a vote. The motion passed, but the vote was not unanimous. Seven people voted in favor, none voted against, and there was one abstention. Next, **President Gustafson** asked if anyone was interested in becoming the chair of this

committee. After further dialogue, it was decided that the issue would be tabled, to be discussed at a later date.

- **President Gustafson** discussed student social gatherings, and asked the body if we had any specific ideas on what to do next, or whether we should even consider having another social gathering this semester. As graduate students, what do we look for in a social gathering? **Vice-President Lanning** pointed out that our Constitution directly specifies that we can only fund one social meeting per semester, but we might want to change that. We need to figure out a way, policy-wise, how to have another event. Perhaps we can task the Student Welfare Committee with looking into this. Everyone was in agreement that **Senator Morgera** should investigate this with her committee.
- **President Gustafson** brought up the current standing of graduate housing. Currently the policy for graduate housing is basically non-existent. What we are pushing for, with the full support of Dean Railey and Dr. Kimberly Jackson, is to try to find a way in the future for graduate students to be able to live on campus. We are desperately pushing for a graduate suite to be included in the five year housing plan.
- **President Gustafson** referred next to graduate student parking times, since the earliest spots are only available after 4:00p.m. She sits on the Parking and Transportation Committee with Muhammed Sumbundu, and they have pushed for an earlier time, but it will not change. The lot behind the library will not change to 4:00p.m. This has been a source of concern as well since most graduate classes end at night, and are sometimes obligated to park far away from their classroom buildings. Students have been advised to take the shuttle, but this is problematic because the shuttle does not run regularly. **Senator Phillips** asked if there is any way graduate students can get a different color sticker, but **President Gustafson** replied that this has been refused in the past. Perhaps there is a way to make a motion as the GSA, speak to our constituents and get their opinion on the matter, and later bring it to the College Senate to see if the issue can be picked up again. There was general discussion and agreement that even though graduate classes start at 4:30p.m., there is not enough time for graduate students who get out of work at 4:00p.m., for example, to arrive in school and have meetings, go to the library, etc. Security at night is also an issue. **President Gustafson** opined that Senators should talk to their constituents and get their opinion, and bring this up again for discussion during our next meeting. Everyone was in agreement.
- **President Gustafson** said that the President of the school has asked specifically that the GSA Senate ask among their constituents about the various needs for new programs or degrees at Buffalo State. This is ongoing throughout the year. The President wants to know what graduate students want. **Vice-President Lanning** said that a Master's program in Urban

Planning would be favorable, as well as a Master's in Business Administration. **Secretary Creech** inquired after doctorate programs, but they are not being discussed at this time.

- **President Gustafson** asked the Senate if a procedure could be created to fill the empty Senate seats for the School of Arts and Humanities and the School of the Professions. We need to fill these seats, especially since the majority of funding requests come from the School of Arts and Humanities. It seems fair that they should have representation on the Senate; people who are willing to work and give back to the community. **Secretary Creech** agreed and suggested we come up with a plausible way to fill the seats, since she knows people in her program (English M.A.) that would be willing to serve. **President Gustafson** said that in her experience, the best solution is to actively look for students who meet the criteria for being a Senator, and ask them to make a brief speech before the governing body, stating the reasons why they should be chosen. They are later asked to leave the room, and the student body votes on whether they should be the representatives or not. **Secretary Creech** agreed with this idea. **Vice-President Lanning** concurred as well, and expressed her desire to not work with a half-empty Senate again.
- **Sixth Motion: Vice-President Lanning** motioned that the current Graduate Student Association Senate be allowed to bring possible nominees for the open Senate positions by the November 7th meeting of the current academic year (2014-2015). Possible representatives from the Schools of Arts and Humanities and the School of the Professions will give a short platform, not to exceed two minutes. After all nominations are put forward and spoken about, a vote will be held via secret ballot, and the people with the most votes will be chosen. **Secretary Creech** seconded the motion. **President Gustafson** called for discussion, and after seeing none, put it to a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Constituent Questions:

- Earlier in the meeting, Muhammed Sumbundu congratulated the newly elected Senators, and spoke briefly about the importance of the Graduate Student Association. He encouraged everyone to attend the Inauguration Weeks events for the new President of SUNY Buffalo State, Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner. He also stated his willingness to help out with the writing of by-laws and with policy-making, should the GSA ever require his assistance.
- **Senator Yuwar** inquired after the GSA website, specifically the Senators section, and wondered why past Senators are not listed. **President Gustafson** answered that working on a section that includes the biographies of Executive Board members, past and present, was already challenging enough. They were all contacted and were asked to supply

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their information, but not all replied. As for a section featuring Senators, she will work on putting up a list of names in the near future.

Adjournment: at 8:25p.m.

Attendance:

Present:

*Andrea Gustafson – President
Ashley Lanning – Vice-President
Trevor Tomion – Treasurer
Stacy Creech – Secretary
Sean McCormick – Senator
Danielle Morgera – Senator-at-Large
Ashley Perez – Senator
Jaclyn Phillips – Senator
Sam Yuwar – Senator
Dean Kevin Railey – Administrative Liaison*

Absent:

None

Excused:

None

Next Meeting: 17 October 2014.