During my past few months on the GPSS Finance and Budget Committee, I have personally seen how the GPSS budget can directly impact students at the University of Washington. The Special and Departmental Allocations and Travel Grants enable our diverse and motivated student leaders to hold events or travel to learn, harness innovation, and encourage collaboration while instilling our UW values of integrity, excellence, and respect. Our budget is so much more than numbers in a spreadsheet. It can be a way for all students—regardless of financial resources—to attend a career-shaping weekend conference or retreat, an inspiring seminar, or a fun social event building connections across campus. Our budget is also a crucial source of funding for many large events across campus. In addition to events and grants, the GPSS budget is source of student employment on campus. GPSS-allocated funding allows our officers (especially the VP of External Affairs) to spend time in Olympia, speak to our legislators and elected officials about student issues, and organize Lobby Day. The budget is one of the most powerful tools we have to create impactful change in the lives of students. I fully intend to be a responsible and diligent custodian of this tool, while ensuring rigorous financial practices and being a strong advocate for the appropriate use of student tuition dollars.

My strong organizational and analytical skills and focus on listening and accuracy make me uniquely suited for the role of Treasurer. I commend Kerstin Hudon, our current Treasurer, and the Finance and Budget Committee for their efforts to evolve and strengthen our financial tracking systems, allowing GPSS to accurately track our financial activity in real-time. To build on these improvements, I would like to:

1) Enhance our financial reporting system to be more accessible and transparent. One specific way I could do this is by creating visually-appealing reports using software like Tableau. We could easily compare current year spending against our projections and against historical trends. These reports could be regularly shared at our GPSS meetings as a handout, even if a full report is not on the agenda.

2) Continue GPSS’ role as an advocate for responsible use of student tuition dollars on various committees throughout campus, such as the Student Activities Fee, the Student Technology Fee, and the ABB review committee.

In my roles on the Evans Student Budget Committee (ESBC) and the Board of Student Publications (as GPSS Executive Liaison), I have encountered two particularly difficult issues: supporting an increase in Evans School tuition and deciding how to address sustainability issues at The Daily. On the ESBC, I worked with three other Evans students to analyze the budget proposed by the Dean. My fellow committee members and I worked to understand each assumption carefully, think of potential alternatives, and gather student feedback on the budget process. We wrote a memorandum of support to the Provost which outlined our support and concerns. As we move into the next budget cycle, we are actively planning to use student feedback in our meetings with the Dean. We have received feedback that we are the most active student budget committee on campus and have the most transparent process for students to provide feedback on the budget. On the Board of Student Publications, I jumped right into the analysis of annual budgets to determine if The Daily was a sustainable venture with the current business model. My fellow committee members and I requested as much data
as possible about The Daily’s operations and assumptions, and about peer student-published newspapers around the country. We are now looking forward to moving The Daily forward into a new era of journalism by changing the publication schedule, reducing printing costs, and creating new opportunities for students to explore the multimedia landscape—all with a balanced budget.

One issue that I think is particularly important for GPSS to have strong representative is Activity Based Budgeting (ABB). The introduction of ABB in 2013 has undoubtedly increased the efficiency and transparency of tuition-revenue allocations. ABB provides a natural resource allocation method influenced by student demand, so schools are more likely to offer courses based on student interest. However, at least two issues in the ABB system have an inequitable impact on students: a focus on student credit hours and major/degree enrollments, and a discontinuity between student feedback and the budget cycle. With ABB, the number of students in courses (for undergraduates) and the number of students in a particular program (for graduate students) are the metrics by which resources are allocated. Specific issues especially affecting graduate students are cross-department TA/RA positions, enrollment in classes in other departments, and concurrent degree enrollment. Next year will be critical for resolving outstanding these outstanding issues, which are under review by the ABB Phase II Committee.

In my experience, listening is essential to creating meaningful connections. My approach as Treasurer would be to listen to all perspectives, gather data and information, and analyze tradeoffs before making a decision or advising other GPSS officers on financial issues. A budget can promote a change that a policy memo or resolution alone cannot. I hope that you will vote for me to ensure GPSS effectively and responsibly administers student funds over the coming year.