



Finance & Budget Committee

2019-2020 Meeting Minutes

Friday, April 17, 2020, 11:30am
HUB 314: GPSS Board Table

PRESENT:

Shane Schrader – Treasurer; Committee Chair
Becky Tran – Budget Specialist, Staff
Danielle Brown, GPSS Senator; Committee Vice Chair
Julia Overfelt, GPSS Senator, 2020-2021 GPSS Treasurer
A.J. Balatico, GPSS Senator
Terrence Pope, GPSS Senator
Ted Cohen, GPSS Senator
Jared Canright, GPSS Senator

NOT PRESENT:

Simon Crean, GPSS Senator

Shane calls the Meeting to order at 11:35 am.

OVERVIEW

Becky provides each member an agenda, copy of last week's meeting minutes, and Departmental Allocation: Scandinavian Studies - Multipurpose Room Equipment, .

1. Call to Order
 - a. Approval of Agenda

Terrence moves to approve the agenda. *AJ* seconds. No objections. Motion passes.

- b. Approval of the Minutes

Julia moves to approve last week's minutes. *Ted* seconds. No objections. Motion passes.

2. Departmental Allocation Presentation: Scandinavian Studies - Multipurpose Room Equipment

Presentation

Presenters are a graduate student and two administrative staff members.

The Scandinavian Studies department is asking for funds to furnish a new multipurpose space that will be used by the department, but primarily by graduate students as a lounge space. Currently, they're using a conference room to hold graduate seminars, departmental meetings, and kitchen. So, this new space would allow for graduate students to interact with



each other better; and it'll be good to have a dedicated community space. The furniture they listed in their proposal are nesting chairs and bales that can be moved around to whatever kind of purpose the room would be being utilized for, a couch for lounging, and a TV so the room could also be used for small lectures and seminars. They mention their graduate students are mostly TA's as well, so it could also be used for TA's meetings as well.

Questions and Answers

Becky asks if this space is solely for graduate students and how many graduate students does the department have?

An admin answers that the space will not be solely for graduate students; it potentially would be for undergraduate students as well – although it will be under the supervision of other graduate students. For example, they host events for language classes and the Scandinavian language club – so that's an example of when undergraduates would be invited. It will also be accessed by the faculty, it's a space where graduate students can interact with faculty members.

Another admin answers the department currently has 8 graduate students; although that number varies anywhere from 8-12 a year, and the number also varies depending on which students are physically on campus or studying abroad that quarter.

Terrence asks how they gathered a consensus for this specific plan? Was it a plan presented by the graduate students in the department where they thought this was the best use of departmental funds?

An admin answers it was an overall departmental idea of needing a community space. The idea initially started in the administrative office – the room that they are proposing to be converted into a community room is currently an office space for faculty. The administrative proposed this idea to graduate students and faculty and they feedback they got was unanimous that everyone thought it was a good idea. So, there was never a formal vote from graduate students, but they all had an opportunity to weigh in.

Another admin adds that they are new to the department, they joined in December, and one of the first things they did was meet with everyone in the department (either individually or in groups) where they asked what problems existed. They asked faculty about their spaces, graduate students about their spaces – and one of the first things that people mentioned was that graduate students didn't have space to themselves because they all share offices. And the condition of their offices all are in need repairs. There is also no space in the department for any graduate students to proctor exams for their students or a place to meet and work on research with other students so they can collaborate across our disciplines.

A graduate student says that they do not use their office because it's so unpleasant; they refer to the area as the graduate student office dungeon since it's in the basement of Raitt Hall and there are three offices that are overcrowded and they all share. There's not space or opportunity to hang out and just have casual conversation. So, having a dedicated space for graduate students is a great solution.



The first admin adds that graduate students' offices are a few floors down from faculty offices in department offices, so unless the grad students are coming up to meet with faculty, they're not going to bump into them in the halls. So again, that's the department's primary concern with generating a sense of community and collaboration.

Terrence asks how confident the presenters are in securing the other \$3,000 to make these renovations.

An admin replies that they're confident with their available departmental funds and endowment revenue. They have not formally pitched it to their advisory board yet because this project has taken a backseat considering no one can use it right now.

Shane asks with the TV and the wall mount, who would be taking care of installation and maintenance?

An admin answers that UW Facilities will have to install the TV per university policy, so that's another added cost. And since it's a department space, the administration would be responsible for the upkeep and keeping it clean. Although their department has a Diversity and Equity committee who have created a new plan on the shared space responsibility that they will be implementing.

Ted asks if they have any written communications about gauging graduate student interests that they would be willing to forward along to the committee, specifically about the items they're requesting in their budget. Ted also asks if they've checked out UW Surplus to see if they can find more competitive costs for a lot of the items you're requesting.

An admin responds that these specific items weren't sent or discussed with students or faculty. They are set on the idea of having nesting tables and chairs because the space is so small and limiting. They have been to Surplus, but they haven't seen any furniture that would be suitable. They are open to sharing the proposal with everyone in the department.

Discussion

Ted asks for clarification, does the GPSS funding guidelines state the limit is \$15 or \$25 per student?

Shane answers that for capital items, it's \$1,000 per department per academic year.

Ted adds that this is a tricky application because it seems like they've skirting a lot of our requirements for these sorts of applications and asks what the committee thinks.

Shane says that one of our stipulations is that it should be purchased by the end of the quarter following approval of funding, which will not happen due to COVID-19. But this is a minor detail that we can easily waive. It also doesn't seem like a fully graduate student space and he's aware this is coming from a place of privilege that his department has a dedicated graduate student lounge and recognizes that every building or department can have that. Shane doesn't enjoy that it wasn't just for graduate students but also



undergraduates, faculty, and staff as well. So he questions if this is something the administration wants or is it actually student driven?

Ted asks who the presenters were.

Shane says that one of them is a graduate student and GPSS senator.

Becky agrees but points out they didn't really speak during this presentation.

Shane says the other two were administrative staff members in the department.

Ted mentions that he's never seen administrators present at these kinds of things. GPSS did approve a ping pong table for the Forestry Department once, and that piece of equipment lives in a space that is open to the public. But there's some precedent for approving things that are not necessarily only for graduate students. *Ted* would like to see more student involvement or proof of surveys for these sorts of purchases. That could be done through email threads where they talk to students about this or have them fill out a survey where they conclude this is what graduate students want.

Shane states that this may be tough because they have such a small graduate footprint. This might have been an in-person conversation with the majority of the department, so they may be acting on that.

Becky notes that this is a probability, that there were only verbal communications. And since the department is so small, they probably don't have a collective student body within the department. So maybe the administrators decided to step up and do this for the students.

Julia thinks that it's reasonable to request more like paperwork, especially because they won't be using it this quarter. Since they have time, it's not a big deal to ask them to come back to us later.

Terrence asks for clarification, is our problem that they don't have enough paperwork or is our problem that there's a conflict of interest because their faculty is advocating for this.

Shane answers that he thinks the latter point leads to the former point because 2/3 of the presenters were not students, so it makes him wonder if there's a conflict of interest.

Terrence proposes if it would be more likely that in a smaller department that there's more cooperation between graduate students and faculty in a way that might lead to this type of thing.

Shane speaks from his point of view with his department, that while his department is very large, his degree program is small and that the admins closely support students; *Shane* is personally in conversations with his admin all the time about doing stuff for the student body. And he could see that if a graduate student was coming in and didn't know or feel comfortable with how the process is at UW, it might be easier to bring in their own admin people to help present.



Terrence agrees to requesting more information – ask them to send out a quick survey were maybe 60% of students fill it out and come back to us.

Ted agrees with this idea.

Danielle agrees as well and says she remembers the administrators saying that it would help them interest with graduate students more; maybe the students don't want that space for the same reason.

Terrence raises the point of us potentially reading the results of a survey from the student body that's already been filtered through the department's admins, or through the faculty tipping the scales.

Shane says we can reach out directly to the senator and ask them.

Becky informs the group that when she emailed the senator, the senator immediately CC'ed her departmental people and asked them to answer her inquiries.

Julia asks if we have any official rules that say we want students to present. Or say that they can bring additional graduate students, but they can't bring any administrators.

Shane says that we currently do not have anything that says graduate students can't bring third party people to present. However, it might be good to reach out to the student/senator and let them know they need to present some initial polling survey data from the other students and send that information to GPSS.

Ted says it might be good to create guidelines that only students should be presenting to F+B for departmental and special allocations.

Terrence thinks it may be an interesting change because it could resolve some of the issues we come across from undergraduate RSO's if we require them to bring a graduate student to present. Or it would be good to incentivize undergraduate groups to have gone and reached out to graduate students.

Ted thinks that if we are to make that change, we should first put it through the Student Activities Office and whether they think a change like this would be too jarring or not.

Julia moves to table deciding on funding Scandinavian Studies until we get more information. *Ted* seconds. Motion passes. No objections.

3. Travel Grant Exception Discussion and Vote

Shane, Julia, and Becky have been working on this Travel Grant Exception language to figure out what we want to do or how we want to say the exception to proceed for getting travel grant money to people that are attending seminars online. Hopefully this will open doors to make it easier to access money since people aren't traveling right now. The



document shows the current Travel Grant terms and there are comments on the side. Shane opens it up for discussion and then we can take a vote on getting it published to our website and getting it put in all campus emails and other resources online to make sure that people know it's available.

Becky states that she only moved the language to this document but wanted to note that one of our eligibility clauses states that recipients are only eligible to receive one Travel Grant every three years and a maximum of two times in their entire graduate career at UW. Is this something we want to waive as well?

Julia thinks we should waive this because no one is traveling anywhere and especially if people aren't presenting, it shouldn't count against this eligibility cause. And we're not spending this money elsewhere.

Danielle asks if the committee means that during this time, attendance doesn't count towards the two times of travel?

Shane says that other groups are not restricting their rules, specifically around eligibility versus previous funding. For example, STF had one group come in that wanted to get approval on how they use something that they've funded recently, but it wasn't actually getting more dollars, which would have been against the rules for them to get more money for the same kind of project. Again, like we don't have to follow that guideline, and this is something that we should think about is that, you know, our guidelines aren't set in stone. If we want to change this, like, it will have to go to, you know, approval from like this and travel grant members. If the committee wants to allow people to receive multiple awards, we also need to be careful of people who will try to take advantage of that loophole.

Terrence asks if these grants come in front of a committee.

Shane answers that the Travel Grant committee meets 5 times a year; there's a summer deadline as well where the Treasurer and other officers grade. But the committee grades all the applications and then meets to vote on who gets funding.

Terrence wonders if it's necessary to change the language then, maybe in the event that someone tries to abuse the system, it can be the committee's job in that case to sort it out

Shane encourages having stricter language to put less work on the committee's behalf. He doesn't want a situation where they get 30 proposals and half of them are repeats. A locked door only stops an honest criminal.

Julia states that she wants to look into the possibility of opening up funds next year and in the future to not only fund students who are presenting at conferences. So, she wants to take this opportunity to work on some of the language and see how it works in this quarter which would be really helpful for next year.

Shane says that at the end of this quarter, F+B, as a group, will go through the current funding guidelines for all funding sources the Treasurer oversees and make



recommendations for the future Treasurer. But this is a priority to GPSS, we want to make more funds available to more people, and it would be interesting to see how that works once we remove the barrier of presenting.

Danielle asks if we should change the wording in the second paragraph about the eligibility clause?

Julia says that maybe we should just add an asterisk instead of changing all the guidelines.

Shane says that we will add a note above at the top of the Travel Grants section that state our new special terms. These aren't in our bylaws, so we can easily change the guidelines.

Ted agrees to adding this as a footnote to the current Travel Grants. The only thing he would change is instead of stating that it's for the duration of Spring Quarter, that it would state for the duration of university online training.

Jared recommends saying "duration of the suspension of in person educational activity at the University of Washington".

Ted and *Julia* agree to this wording.

Danielle asks what we are deciding to do with the "conference acceptance letter or email" requirement.

Shane thinks they need to provide evidence that they have already pre-registered and paid up front, and then we'll transfer the money to their department to reimburse them. Shane is worried about people just requesting \$100 and saying they're going to an online conference, but just pockets the money instead.

Jared suggests having a trust and verify model where we front the money and once they've registered, they'll need to send us the receipt or registration confirmation. If they fail to give this information, then it would affect their future eligibility for funding with GPSS.

Shane thinks this is possible, but it may be tricky at the departmental level. We transfer money to the department, who then cuts a paper check for the graduate student – once that's been done, it is near impossible to demand that money back from students. So, if we demand the department pay us back, then the department is out of the money. We would only be harming the department.

Jared says that hopefully this doesn't happen often enough to be a problem.

Shane agrees but thinks we should put in a clause that says they can only apply for this Travel Grant once during this exception period. Worst case scenario is that GPSS is out a couple hundred bucks, which isn't the end of the world considering how much the Travel Grant budget is, but doesn't want people taking advantage of this.

Julia says we need to keep track if anybody doesn't verify and if they try to apply again in

the future, we would disqualify them.

Jared agrees that we should have a system in place to tag their names.

Shane informs the committee that we have a list of names of those who have applied and gotten a Travel Grant. Currently, Becky is working on getting out Travel Grant funds back from Winter 2020 recipients whose conferences were cancelled.

Becky calls time for this discussion topic.

Jared makes a motion to extend time by 10 minutes. *Danielle* seconds. *Julia* makes a point of information that she has class at 12:30 and must leave by then. *Jared* amends his motion to 5 minutes. *Julia* seconds. No objections. Motion passes.

Jared says that it sounds like we have the ability to collect data. If it doesn't work out or things get back, we can shut this exception down. But he would rather us take a trusting stance and if a few people take advantage of it, it's still worth it if many others benefit.

Terrence asks if we're currently worried if someone requests the funds for a conference and then their own department reimburses them.

Shane says he concerns of people requesting registration funds and then pocketing the money. And since departments are the ones that issue checks to students, they won't be able to get that money back once students cash the check.

Terrence says that in a sense, it's not that different from our normal Travel Grant process.

Shane states the difference is that we require proof that you've been accepted to present at a conference.

Danielle lists a positive that it will give Julia, next year's Treasurer, an opportunity to see this structure play out in a short period of time and it will help create this structure for the future.

Shane states that before we vote on this, he wants to add language about this is a rolling basis with no set deadline.

Jared moves to approve the new Travel Grant Exception language: "For the duration of the suspension of in-person learning activities at the University of Washington, GPSS Travel Grants Committee will be considering applications for non-presenting attendees to remote conferences or seminars. These applications will be held to the same standards as traditional Travel Grants and will be reviewed on a rolling basis; applicants will have their request reviewed within 2 weeks of submission. Any attendance grants awarded within this period will not count towards the travel funding limitations of once every three years and a maximum of two awards during one's UW student career." *Ted* seconds. No objections.

VOTE: ALL vote YES. None opposed. None abstains. Motion passes.



Becky points out that the committee never discussed Scandinavian Studies' Departmental Allocation.

Julia moves to table our Endowment Discussion in lieu of talking about Scandinavian Studies. *Ted* seconds. No objections. Motion passes.

4. Endowment Discussion

Shane states we have one minutes left and asks the groups if they would like to push on and hear about the endowment or move it to next week's meeting. Either way, he will bring these Endowment Projections to Exec on Wednesday.

Terrence moves to table endowment discussions until next week. Jared seconds. No objections. Motion passes.

Ted asks, before we adjourn – how many more senate meetings do we have left this year. Shane answers three more senate meetings and states that endowment changes don't have to go through Senate, they just need to go through Exec – even though Shane doesn't agree with this.

Ted says he doesn't agree with this either and clarifies that the reason he asked is because he thinks it should go through as some sort of a resolution and if it's that's going to happen, then we should introduce it soon.

Shane states that his timeline is to present it to Exec on Wednesday and see what they think about it. He'll also bring it to F+B next week to discuss as well. But before F+B next week, Exec may have already moved to vote on it. Ideally, we would be able to present a few options to Senate during the next meeting.

Ted thinks it should be a formalized resolution and thinks it should come up at the next meeting.

Shane says the issue is that resolutions have to have a first and second reading. And it has to be sent out through the agenda a week in advance, which means we would need to have this entire thing written before next Wednesday. So, the timeline would be really tight for that. Shane thinks the best approach would be to present it as a discussion point, getting senate feedback, and then having Exec/F+B vote on it the following week. Shane does like the idea of making a resolution but just thinks it gets tricky with the current timeline.

Ted says he'll continue this conversation with Shane online via emails.

5. Adjourn

Ted moves to adjourn the meeting. *Danielle* seconds. No objections.

The Meeting was adjourned at 12:08 pm.