GPSS Senate Meeting Minutes

Wednesday April 1st 2020, 5:30 pm HUB 332

**Members present:**

* GPSS President Giuliana Conti
* GPSS Vice President of Internal Affairs Matt McKeown
* GPSS Vice President of External Affairs Maggie Dunham Jordahl
* GPSS Secretary Leslie Michaud
* GPSS Treasurer Shane Schrader
* Executive Senator Michael Diamond
* Executive Senator Andrew Shumway
* Executive Senator Jackie Wong
* Executive Senator Olivia Sanderfoot
* Executive Senator Terrence Pope
* ASUW Representative Cooper Robertson
1. **[Action] Call to Order 5:33 pm**

**Giuliana Conti** called the Senate meeting to order at 5:33pm.

1. **[Action] Approval of the Agenda 5:34 pm**

**Giuliana Conti** entertained a motion to amend the agenda. **Andrew Shumway (Earth and Space Sciences)** motioned to amend agenda topic #4 - Elections Protocol to be an action item instead of information. **Michael Diamond (Atmospheric Sciences)** seconded. **Matt McKeown** motioned to remove agenda topics #9 and #10. **Leslie Michaud** seconded. No objections.

**Michael Diamond (Atmospheric Sciences):** Point of Information – can you clarify why we cannot discuss anything but pressing matters in relation to agenda topics #9 and #10?

**Giuliana Conti:** We are bound by the Office of Public Records and Office of Public Meetings Act which requires us to uphold certain protocol during our public meetings. Because we are entirely online now, the Governor of Washington had to make certain amendments to the OPMA guidelines, which includes that any action items taken within an official meeting bound by OPMA rules must only be pertinent directly to the direct functioning of that organization.

**Shane Schrader:** The OPMA office summarized the Governor’s waiver and specifically called for reducing meetings and actions for meetings to only be routine or necessary meetings for the functioning of an organization. That is part of why we are scaling back things that are not going to be pertinent for the Spring quarter.

**Giuliana Conti** entertained a motion to approve the amended agenda. **Michael Diamond (Atmospheric Sciences)** motioned. **Leslie Michaud** seconded. No objections.

1. **[Information] COVID-19 Update 5:39pm**

**Giuliana Conti**: Since we are fully online this quarter due to COVID-19, we will not be able to do some of the things that we normally do during our Senate meetings. This has posed a significant challenge for the Executive Board as we try to figure out how to maintain a democratic process despite the online nature of meetings. Another major concern that has come up is increased volume of Zoom bombing. This is especially traumatizing when someone interrupts dissertation defenses with pornographic content or crude material. Because all GPSS meetings are open to the public, we had to figure out a way to mitigate that potential issue. One of the ways we are tackling this issue is by, first, creating a set of standards for Zoom meetings which I sent out earlier today. Secondly, we are going to be muting everyone for the duration of the meeting (except for certain parts of the agenda) so that we can efficiently manage anyone who may come in and act inappropriately. If you find anybody participating in a manner that is not deemed appropriate for this meeting, please use the chat box functionality to notify us so we can remove them. The Executive Board will be co-hosting this meeting and have managerial options to remove/ mute people and take over slide content. Since this is the first meeting, we are asking for your patience and hoping to amend the protocol as needed to further regulate meetings.

**Giuliana Conti** entertained a motion to suspend parliamentary procedures for the remainder of this meeting except for agenda topic #7 – Budget FY20-21. **Julia Overfelt (Evans School)** motioned. **Cooper Robertson** seconded. No objections.

**Giuliana Conti**: If you have any urgent questions that would generally be a point of information or point of order and cannot be typed into the chat box, please use the ‘Raise Hand’ function instead of abruptly interrupting the meeting. The Officers and Executive Senators will be monitoring the chat box and Raise Hand functionality to regulate the meeting and answer your questions in a timely manner.

**Giuliana Conti** thanked the Officers, Executive Senators and other Senators who helped prepare for a fully online spring quarter in light of the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

**Giuliana Conti**: A lot of work went into prepping not just for this meeting, but also for the advocacy and representation of the nearly 17,000 graduate and professional students on all three UW campuses. Some of the things that came out of this are certain initiatives to include ways that we can build community over the internet and use some of the same energy that we would have on our social media and finding ways to incorporate that into virtual events. We are updating our website constantly with materials relevant to GPSS as well as resources for various populations affected by this pandemic. It is now our prerogative to adequately support our graduate and professional students who have been affected by the coronavirus as well as to advocate on their behalf. Some of the student populations most impacted by COVID-19 include international and undocumented students, parents and caregivers, professional students (especially those in the health sciences field and those dependent on obtaining relevant accreditations and/ or certifications), students who are reliant on food and housing grants, etc. Now, Shane and Matt will give us some updates on fees because we have gotten a lot of questions on that.

**Matt McKeown**: The U-PASS committee met earlier this week and voted to suspend the U-PASS fees for Spring quarter. Given the current COVID-19 situation, students are generally not using public transportation at the moment. Additionally, all the transit agencies that fall under ORCA are not charging any fees. So there are no expenses being incurred by the U-PASS program currently. I have a call set up for tomorrow to get a little bit more information regarding the finalization of this – we have to put this in front of the Board of Regents to get their approval. From my understanding, if you have already paid the U-PASS fees, you will be refunded the $84/ quarter charge back into your account and if you have not already paid fees, the amount should just be deducted from your statement.

**Shane Schrader:** I am going to provide a brief overview on the other fees which will not be reduced or waived at this point, as far as I am aware. I’ll start with the operations fees, this is basically tuition and goes towards different colleges and departments based on your enrollment. This fee will not be waived since salaries still need to be paid out to faculty and staff. The building fee accounts for whatever state and donor funding does not cover to keep the lights on in campus. Despite buildings being used less during these times, custodians are working overtime to ensure that campus buildings are clean, laboratories are still open and servers are still running. Student technology fees provides technology and technological resources outside of the classroom. Part of this fee enables the Student Technology Loan Program to loan out laptops, projectors, cameras, etc. to technologically disadvantaged students. The IMA bond fee allows us to pay off the debt covenants towards the 30-year loan issued for the IMA renovation. We are legally bound to keep paying that towards our debt covenants so this fee will still apply. The facilities renovation fee is another mandatory fee that is used to pay debt services associated with the renovation of the HUB, Ethnic Cultural Center and Hall Health. Lastly, we have the Service and Activities (SAF) fees which goes towards funding student activities and programs or to pay toward bonds that fund new buildings, facilities or lands.

1. **[Action] Elections Protocol** **5:55pm**

**Fiona Murray:** First of all, I would like to thank the Elections Committee and the Executive Board for all their hardwork in trying to figure out how to conduct elections remotely. We have put together a brief one-page overview of elections protocol to give you information on how elections will be run from a candidate perspective as well as a voter perspective. We will be using Zoom and Poll Everywhere to conduct the elections with an absentee ballot option available via email (for those students who cannot attend the meeting in person). The decision to use Poll Everywhere is still tentative because we need someone very well versed in the technology within the Elections Committee to be able to run elections smoothly. To the extent, I would like to entertain a motion for a new Elections Committee member who is proficient in using Poll Everywhere.

**Jackie Wong (Health Services)** nominated herself. **Logan C. Jarrell (Marine & Environmental Affairs)** seconded. No objections.

**Fiona Murray:** The one page overview provides details on important dates and requirements for running for elections. There are specific meetings that candidates are required to attend before submitting an application, however the Elections Committee as a collective body reserves the rights to make judgements on possible exemptions for those requirements on an ad-hoc basis. Considering the circumstances we are in right now, we will be fairly lenient about granting exemptions for meeting some of those requirements.

1. **[Action] Officer Position Descriptions 6:05pm**

**Shane Schrader:** The Treasurer serves as the Chief Financial Officer for the organization and administers all aspects of the GPSS budget. The Treasurer is also in charge of overseeing all financial records and budget transfers, and managing travel grants, departmental allocations, and special allocations. The Treasurer oversees committees related to Travel Grants, Finance and Budget, Services and Activities Fee, and Student Tech Fee. You will supervise and work closely with the Budget Specialist who does a lot of work for travel grants and F&B, among other things.

**Leslie Michaud:** The Secretary is in charge of all the records for GPSS (making sure they are up-to-date and filed correctly), and making sure that everything goes through the right order especially with regards to resolutions and bylaw amendments. This officer position oversees all of Senate including the agenda, roster, attendance, participation, Poll Everywhere technology, etc. and manages diversity efforts both within the organization and campus wide. The Secretary’s responsibilities include co-chairing the Equity and Accountability Committee and oversight of the Judicial Committee. You will be working with two office staff in this role- the Senate Clerk and Office Manager.

**Maggie Dunham Jordahl:** The VP of External Affairs advocates for graduate and professional students to local, state, federal governments and works with Washington Student Association (WSA), Student Advocates for Graduate Education (SAGE) and other student/ higher education coalitions. The main priority in the Fall quarter is setting the Legislative Agenda through LAB and getting approval from the Senate before Thanksgiving. In the Winter quarter, the VP of External Affairs is responsible for registering with the State of Washington as a lobbyist for higher education during the legislative session and maintaining a notable presence in Olympia during the legislative session (at least three days per week). In this role, you will work with both internal and external stakeholders and represent GPSS on relevant university commissions, committees, and councils and oversee the Policy Director and Organizing Director.

**Matt McKeown:** The VP of Internal Affairs oversees all internal staff relations (recruitment, interviews, HR management) and manages marketing and communications. This officer role also assists in the planning and execution of all GPSS events and programming and advocate for graduate and professional students through various committee representation such as U-PASS, Grad School Council, and the HUB Board of Reps. The VP of Internal Affairs oversees the Science & Policy Committee and directly supervises three GPSS staff members, the Event Director, the Communications Director, and the Creative Director.

**Giuliana Conti:** The President serves as the “voice” of graduate and professional students in the absence of the Executive Board and other Senators. This position is pivotal in managing campus liaisons, chairing the Senate and the Executive Committee, and lobbying with the VP of External Affairs. The President is responsible for chairing the Arts Council and sits on the Board of Regents, Faculty Senate, and Provost Advisory Committee among many other committees. This role oversees the University Affairs Director who helps manage liaisons and keep up with research information and data.

1. **[Information] External Update** **6:16pm**

**Maggie Dunham Jordahl** provided an update on External Affairs.

**Maggie Dunham Jordahl**: Today is census day, so please fill out your census. This is very critical because students have historically been underrepresented due to confusion around where they live. You are supposed to fill out the Census based on where you are on April 1st. For those who moved back home, please fill out the census to indicate where you would have been without the effects of COVID-19. Today is also the last day of SAGE federal lobby day. We discussed COVID-19 response and general higher education advocacy. With regards to State politics, I will be sending out a memo of the State session with notes from this meeting. We also have support from two State legislators – Senator Randall and Representative Pollet have reached out to request feedback on how they can help out our student population during these times. We also got an email from Rep Pollet, who put us in contact with a Seattle Times reporter to give graduate and professional students a platform to voice student experiences during COVID-19.

1. **[Information] Budget FY20-21** **6:20pm**

**Giuliana Conti** reinstated parliamentary procedures and handed over chairship to **Shane Schrader** for the duration of this agenda item.

**Shane Schrader** provided a line by line breakdown of the FY20-21 budget.

**Shane Schrader**: The first major bucket in the proposed budget pertains to administration fees. There are no major changes in the line items related to office supplies and equipment and materials. Staff onboarding budget has been reduced by $100 to more accurately reflect expenditure for the current academic year. SAGE Day on the Hill travel has been bumped using money from officer's travel funds to $3000. Printing and promotion materials have been combined and increased to $1600 to reflect increased spending on marketing.

**Terrence Pope (Psychology):** Can you give us a top-level 5000 ft overview of how the budget works / does not work under the current circumstances? Would we be able to renegotiate the budget halfway through FY 20-21 once we have more clarity into things like travel funding?

**Shane Schrader:** Operationally, it is not possible to change the budget once the fiscal year has started. That is why we have created and pushed this budget through as it stands currently. We are operating under the assumptions that things will be business as usual for FY21 starting in the fall. If that is not the case, we will determine a different path forward.

**Shane Schrader:** Officer travel funds is a bucket that officers can apply to and use for their travel to conferences like SAGE. This money will be coming from our endowment distribution funds rather than coming from SAF allocations. We thought it was better to use student funds to go back to students for increased dollars towards conference travel and grants, rather than for officer travel alone.

**Shane Schrader:** Programming budget entails only food and alcohol for our events. Room rentals and any other incidentals are not covered in this. The money for programming reflects Provost designated funds only. There is no change to the total amount in this bucket compared to the prior year. The allocation for Fall events got bumped by 58% to reflect the overwhelmingly positive response we received after the Halloween social at the Burke Museum. Another change here pertains to Committee events. Since we didn’t spend a lot of money on Committee events this year, we reduced that line item by 46% compared to the current year.

**Alexander Novokhodko (Mechanical Engineering):** Thank you for putting this together, Shane. I noticed there was a line item for professional development events at $3000 for the current academic year, but don’t see anything for the FY20-21 year. Can you provide some clarity on why this is so?

**Shane Schrader:** That line item came about because of the poster session that we had for graduate students last year. While we don’t have the same event planned for the upcoming year, the new officers can reallocate money from Fall/ Spring events towards any new professional development events that may come up with. We didn’t think that earmarking an entire $3000 for an event that is not going to happen is a good idea, and also wanted to give the newly elected officers more flexibility in how they wish to spend the programming budget.

**Colin Trobough (Jackson School):** How would our budget be impacted if the U.S. economy experiences a significant inflation and a decrease in the value of the dollar?

**Shane Schrader:** Most of our funding comes from SAF which is dependent largely on the fees collected from students. There isn’t as much of a direct exposure to inflation and foreign exchange markets. However, if we consider the butterfly effect, there is a possibility that funding for schools may go down depending on enrollment numbers and the associated tuition fees.

**Shane Schrader:** In terms of officer budget, the biggest change we made was cutting back on officers’ travel (except VP of External Affairs) to reallocate that money towards lobbying in DC. Travel expenses for VP External going to Olympia have been increased by 33% for next year to reflect the increased number of legislation days in 2021. I also rolled the $75 parking permit into this line item since it made more sense. Grad Day on the Hill is a new line item that covers expenses for the bus to travel to Olympia. Conference travel for VP External has not been cut because they have two major conferences to attend. The overall 49% increase in budget for VP External reflects the need for stronger financial support for this position given increased legislation days next year. With respect to the Treasurer budget, this bucket includes a lot of office-related equipment. For instance, our telephone and copy machine leases reflect the actual costs and hence are unchanged. We got rid of allocations for computer equipment and software, and equipment replacement since we have sufficient reserves for both. HUB administration fees will now be covered by SAF funding to the HUB.

**Shane Schrader:** Individual personnel covers salaries for the officers and remains unchanged. We cannot predict the tiers of the newly elected officers, so we averaged the salary figures for the officers over the last few years. Tuition compensation for the 20-21 academic year has increased by 14% based on the actual spend.

**Julia Overfelt (Evans School):** What is the health of GPSS reserves?

**Shane Schrader:** Per our bylaws, we need to have at least 25% of the operating budget in our reserves at all times. Right now, based on the projected budget for FY20-21 that number would have to be a $126,000. If we make no more changes to our reserves projected for next year, we should have approximately $292,000. That is above our required 25%.

**Shane Schrader:** Historically, we had planned to onboard some of our staff during the summer. However, that created an equity issue since not all staff are available in the summer. So we decided to pass on that responsibility to the officers. This past summer was an incredible opportunity to get to know fellow officers and create much better programming for the upcoming academic year. To that extent, we decided to keep the 12 weeks of officer summer pay at $30hr for 20 hours per week. This is based on Tier 1 graduate student pay. We also haven’t made any changes to our staff salaries except for the EA + Campus Partnerships position, which reflects an increase in hours from 15 hours to 17 hours at the same pay rate.

**Shane Schrader:** The next portion of the budget involves benefits loading and is typically one that goes up year over year. These figures are based on the tier of the employee and from my conversation with the Accounting department, the estimated number for next year is 20.4%. For FY2020, the actual loading was 22.7% for officers and 20.9% for staff, the original budgeted values are therefore incorrect. This is a portion of the budget that we don’t have much control over.

**Shane Schrader:** Departmental allocations will remain unchanged from the current year. For special allocations, F&B Committee has talked a lot about the possibility of increasing the maximum amount of money that we can give RSOs (especially because programming costs including room rentals are going up). The 14% increase in Special Allocations is to allow a higher upper limit for funding. Travel grants also remain unchanged for the upcoming year.

There is a 4% increase in our total annual budget, and a 3% increase in our SAF funding request which is the biggest source of our income. Our other funding sources are income from the Provost, endowment distributions and money from the general fund.

**Theodore Cohen (Molecular Engineering):** How will the current economic climate affect our endowment distributions?

**Shane Schrader:** When the endowment was created in 2013, the letter of understanding between GPSS and the treasury was that we would be getting 4% each year. So, if the entire UW treasury increased by 8-10% which it has during the bull market that just ended recently, then we will still get our 4%. Optimistically, I don’t think we will get to a point where that amount will be pulled.

**Shane Schrader** handed the chairship back to Giuliana Conti.

**Giuliana Conti** entertained a motion to vote on the FY20-21 budget. **Marty Varela (RCSA Representative)** motioned to vote. **Colin Trobough (Jackson School)** seconded. No objections.

*The FY20-21 budget has been approved through unanimous consent by the Senate body.*

1. **[Information] Events Update 7:00pm**

**Matt McKeown:** All our previously planned on-campus events for the Spring quarter have been canceled in adherence with State and federal stay-at-home laws surrounding the current COVID-19 situation.If you have any ideas for virtual events that could help build community, please email our Events Director at gpssevnt@uw.edu.

**Giuliana Conti:** As I see the effects of this global pandemic on the job market and the volume of stress that it puts on graduate and professional students, especially the 2020 graduating class, we are going to continue with the originally planned Graduate and Professional Symposium in an online format. It will be rebranded as “*Outsmart today’s job market: an online career symposium for UW grad students”*. This free online symposium will include workshops, panels, lectures, and online resources to prepare graduate and professional students for the launch into their career this June and beyond. It will be held on Friday, April 24th from 9am-5pm. At the end of the day, we will have a virtual happy hour to celebrate the day’s events.

1. **[Information] Announcements 7:05pm**

**Robert Levine (Oceanography):** I wanted to let you know that the College of the Environment Student Advisory Council has put together a virtual seminar series starting on 4/7 called *Beyond Academia* about working in non-academic roles. This will be a great opportunity to learn about job possibilities and meet alumni who can help you land your next job.

**Olivia Sanderfoot (Environmental and Forest Sciences):** I’ve been encouraged by my colleagues to share a community science project that I have been working on. It is aimed at monitoring birds in urban and suburban neighborhoods across the Pacific Northwest, while social distancing measures are currently in place. If you are interested in learning more and would like to participate in my study, I will send out a link and you can also email me directly at oliviavs@uw.edu.

1. **[Action] Adjournment 7:14pm**

**Giuliana Conti** entertained a motion to adjourn the Senate meeting. **Cooper Robertson** **(ASUW Representative)** motioned to adjourn. **Logan C. Jarrell (Marine & Environmental Affairs)** seconded. No objections.