

# GPSS Senate Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 12th, 2022, 5:30pm via Zoom

## Members present:

GPSS President Aaron Yared  
GPSS Vice President of Internal Affairs Gabrielle Rivera  
~~GPSS Vice President of External Affairs Payton Swinford~~  
GPSS Vice President of Equity & Inclusion Meshell Sturgis  
GPSS Vice President of Finance A.J. Balatico  
GPSS Senate Clerk Janis Shin  
Executive Senator Marty Varela  
Executive Senator Britahny Baskin  
Executive Senator Ashlee Abrantes  
~~Executive Senator Malikai Bass~~  
Executive Senator Pratima KC  
Executive Senator Davon Thomas  
ASUW Director of Internal Policy Nicole Hishmeh  
~~Associate Director of Student Activities Rene Singleton~~  
Associate Dean of Student and Postdoctoral Affairs Bill Mahoney  
~~Husky Union Building Executive Director Justin Camputaro~~

## 1. [Action] Call to Order 5:39pm

**Aaron Yared** called the meeting to order at 5:39pm.

## 2. [Action] Approval of the Agenda 5:40pm

**Gabby Rivera** motioned to add “Programming Discussion” for 5 minutes before “Committee Reports.” **Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** seconded. No objections.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** asked if the Counseling Center speaker could go first.

**Aaron Yared** said that the Counseling Center item would happen right after the icebreaker.

**Greg Papp (Marine & Environmental Affairs)** moved to approve the amended agenda.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** seconded. No objections.

## 3. [Action] Approval of the Minutes 5:41pm

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** motioned to approve the minutes

**Jack Flesher (Music)** seconded. No objections.

#### 4. [Information] Land Acknowledgment 5:42pm

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** gave the land acknowledgment. *The Graduate Professional Student Senate acknowledges the indigenous peoples of this land and the land, which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip, and Muckleshoot nations and the Duwamish peoples whose lands the university currently occupies. It is everyone's role and responsibility as guests to understand how their impact entangles the caretakers.*

#### 5. [Information] Ice Breaker and Senate Check-in 5:43pm

**Aaron Yared** welcomed all the senators back to school. He explained that the GPSS officers were trying out a panelist system through Zoom and that breakout rooms were unavailable. He said that the ice breaker would be in a fireside chat format and asked for the senators' thoughts on the UW going back to a virtual format until January 28th. He invited senators to voice their opinions either through the Poll Everywhere or by raising their hands and talking out loud. He said that he had had many conversations with President Cauce, other student leaders, and faculty about this question.

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** said that she felt like a yo-yo. She said that she wanted to have a plan and wanted to know what was going on.

**Alexander Novokhodko (Mechanical Engineering)** said that having labs open and other classes online was a sensible decision. He said that there had been a large student petition effort last quarter where that was essentially one of the core demands. He said that many people would be well served if the administration kept labs open and classes amenable to a virtual format online.

**Gabby Rivera** said that as a member of Student Advocates for Graduate Education ([SAGE](#)), she met on a monthly basis with representatives from other universities across the country. She said that the most recent meeting had been on Monday and that the members had discussed the myriad of variations in COVID responses for different universities. She said that many California schools had similar responses to the UW and that some schools required boosters or N-95 masks. She said that there were some schools that did not even require vaccinations. She said that if anyone had questions about this, then she could add some of her notes from the meeting as an addendum to the minutes.

**Aaron Yared** addressed a question in the Poll Everywhere and said that the UW had not yet decided whether Winter 2022 was an extraordinary circumstances quarter. He said that the President and the Provost were currently in the process of deliberating whether or not it should be and that students should expect to hear about the decision by this Friday.

**Aaron Yared** said he asked President Cauce about when she and Provost Richards would be able to tell students whether or not the January 28 deadline was going to be extended or not and whether it was a hard deadline. He said that President Cauce told him that she and Provost Richards planned to make a decision by next Friday and announce it the following Monday. He said that this would give students at least a week of prior notice, though it still was not a lot of time.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said that he felt that there was not a long term strategic plan. He said that the situation was being decided day by day and that he had reflected on how this impacted labor at the UW. He said that if things were held in person, many workers, students, faculty and staff, would be at risk. He said that UW lacked concrete policies regarding hazard pay. He said on the flip side of things, if everything is held online, some workers' hours may get cut and they may not receive isolation pay. He said that there were labor considerations that had not been widely discussed in the union he was a part of. He said that the union had been driving a lot of those conversations and that the administration could be a bit more transparent with their public processes.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** recalled how his school's dean spoke to members of his class and said that she shared that all the deans met with central administration once a week. He said that she was unable to answer many questions and that she committed to asking those questions on behalf of the students in her meeting with the administration. He said that seeing that deans did not know what was going on and not knowing where the federal government dollars were going suggested that there was no central line of communication.

**Meshell Sturgis** agreed with other senators who had shared their thoughts. She noted that after being virtual for a month, the month following would be a transition period; just because students came back to school in person did not mean everyone was immediately acclimated. She said that whichever direction the administration decided to go, there was stress and transition that had to happen. She also pointed out that the UW's administration's modus operandi was generally unhelpful and that it always passed the buck down to people who were not paid enough.

**Meshell Sturgis** thanked Marty Varela for the land acknowledgement and asked how many times the university needed to do a land acknowledgement until the actual administration and institution gave some of the land back. She said that saying the land acknowledgement would not necessarily create change any time soon because just saying it did not give the person saying it the power to give the land back. She said that even the GPSS as a whole, even if it came up with an official land back statement, the land still needed to be physically given back.

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** said she thought it was ineffective to send students a communication on Monday saying, "Hey, our plan is to resume classes next Monday," and then to wait four days to say, "Oh, by the way, we recognize that this is still a challenging time and that your classes may need to be adjusted to accommodate

people who are either suffering from or isolating from COVID so we're giving instructors the flexibility through the 28th.”

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** said that her daughter who attended Seattle University received a message on Monday telling them that classes would be held remotely until the 30th. She said she was not sure if Aaron Yared had the power to affect these communications, but that it would have been good if UW had also done the same. She said that she was aware the administration was wrestling with whether to hold classes in person versus remotely, but that she would rather that the administration err on the side of not flip flopping, because it made them seem like they did not have access to the best medical information available in the State of Washington. She said it made her feel less confident in their ability to make decisions that were going to benefit her academically and physically, which was not a good situation to be in, especially as someone who resided on campus. She said that as an on-campus resident, she was forced to interact with the community, and said it would be helpful if the administration could acknowledge that. She said that if the administration followed through with the plan of making a decision on Friday and publicizing it on Monday, it would be great if the decision was not changed.

**Aaron Yared** said that the administration believed that the Omicron variant had a lower fatality rate which some students disagreed with. He said that this was possibly one reason why the administration had been wishy washy. He said he would do his best to advocate for the graduate students. He said that the ASUW president, Mustafa, pointed out that last spring the UW had been so proud to be one of the first schools to make a decision to go fully virtual. He said that UW was now trying to wait and see.

**Alexander Novokhodko (Mechanical Engineering)** referred to **Andrea \_\_\_\_\_**'s message in the chat about how people with disabilities are required to submit their forms to the DRS office weeks in advance, yet the administration tells students how the classes will be taught only days in advance.

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** referred to Gabby Rivera's message in the chat and said it would be good to know how many people were comfortable with an entirely virtual winter quarter. She said that creating a straw poll might not be a bad idea.

**Aaron Yared** asked Gabby Rivera to make a poll.

**Aaron Yared** thanked everyone for their input. He said he would make sure to take these points and communicate them to the administration. He said that this input was important and that he felt that the administration and faculty did not have enough student input, especially from graduate students.

## 6. [Information] Counseling Center Speaker 5:56pm

**Natacha Foo Kune** thanked the GPSS for the opportunity to come speak. She said she appreciated listening to the students and said that the students had validated her experience regarding the UW's COVID response.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that she was here to update the Senate about the Counseling Center. She said that the Counseling Center and Hall Health Mental Health had merged and created a new unit called the Counseling Center. She said that this unit included psychotherapists, case managers, and psychiatric providers. She referred to the slides and said that the services offered were more or less the same as they were before: online self help resources, groups, one-on-one support either through counseling or Let's Talk. She said that My SSP was a 24/7 option available to students and that the Counseling Center focused on resources for students with marginalized identities. She said that it also offered referrals for ongoing therapy if the student was interested.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that students in crisis could call 911 or My SSP. She admitted that My SSP was not necessarily able to give students a counselor right away and might need to call students back, but said that My SSP always called students back on the same day. She said that Crisis Connections was a King County resource which students were welcome to use. She said that SafeCampus was about campus safety concerns.

**Natacha Foo Kune** addressed the rumor that it was hard to get an appointment at the Counseling Center in the fall and said that this rumor was correct. She said that the Counseling Center had lost a large number of therapists in late summer, early fall, so it had entered fall quarter severely understaffed and had developed a cancellation list of more than 100 students. She said that the system was changed a little to check in with students who were on the list and waiting for an appointment. She said that the Counseling Center had hired eight new therapists in the fall, and was able to offer people an appointment that same week by the end of the quarter. She asked that students try using the Counseling Center again if they were unable to use the service during the fall as it was not better equipped to serve students' needs. She apologized for the lack of service and said she wanted to offer an explanation of why it happened.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that the core of the issue was that the UW did not pay its therapists enough. She said that many of the therapists had decided to open a private practice knowing that they would be full in a week or two and make more money than working for the university. She said that the Counseling Center was working to increase salaries and retain people.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that anxiety and depression were still the most common concerns for students regarding mental health. She said that social anxiety had increased and that the Counseling Center had observed a small increase of students with psychotic symptoms. She said that everybody, students, staff, faculty, generally seemed to have less of a buffer when faced with a challenging situation. She noted that one positive point for graduate students

during the pandemic was that the Counseling Center was able to serve a larger proportion of graduate students. She said that the proportion of Counseling Center's patients who were graduate students was typically around 27% and noted that the figure had increased to nearly 40%. She said that providing remote services had been particularly helpful to graduate students.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that the Counseling Center would now start to bill insurance starting January 18th. She said that the reason for this was because of the merger between Hall Health and the Counseling Center. She said that this meant the two funding models had to be merged as well. She explained that the Counseling Center was funded by state fees and the Services and Activities Fee (SAF) while Hall Health Mental Health was funded by SAF and billing. She said that when the merge happened, billing had to be included as part of the funding model. She said that billing would allow the Counseling Center to pay salaries, hire more staff, and raise salaries to retain staff, which would ultimately increase access to mental health support.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that regardless of whether somebody had insurance, the Counseling Center would see them. She said that if a student had insurance, the Counseling Center would bill insurance and the part of the bill that the student was responsible for paying, such as a co-insurance, co-pay, deductible, or the entire cost of the session if the student doesn't have insurance, would be aggregated and billed to the SAF, which was something each student had already paid. She said that this means students had no out-of-pocket costs.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that SAF already provided the Counseling Center with funding and that the Counseling Center simply reported how much of the SAF allocation it used to pay for the student portion of bills. She encouraged students to ask questions if they needed clarification.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that psychiatry services were a specialty and expensive service. She said that for the winter quarter, the psychiatry services would use the same funding model as the Counseling Center which meant no out-of-pocket costs for students. She said that the reason the psychiatry services was using this funding model was because it did not have all the contracts fully in place with all insurance companies. She said that it was likely that the psychiatry services would move to a more traditional billing model in the spring, but that the psychiatry services wanted to make sure that all the contracts, especially the Medicaid contracts, were in place first. She said that the Counseling Center was hoping to create a financial assistance program for students who did not have insurance so that it could help with the cost of psychiatry services.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that the Counseling Center offered a number of support groups. She said that the majority of the groups were geared towards graduate students in particular, as well as BIPOC students. She said that the UMOJI group was specifically tailored for Black and Brown graduate women. She said that Our Voices group was for queer grad students and that there was also an international pride space which was meant for either graduate or undergraduate international students that identify as queer, trans, questioning, non-binary and who would like some space to be able to talk about it.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that during COVID times, people frequently talked about stress. She said she wanted to give an alternative message and hoped that people shared it with others. Research actually shows that stress causes harm if we believe that it causes harm. She referred to a Ted Talk that explained the science behind the phenomenon. She said that if people reframed stress more as “this is my body getting ready to address the situation in front of me,” it had less of a negative impact. She welcomed questions from the audience.

**Janis Shin (Molecular Engineering & Sciences)** thanked Natacha Foo Kune for her talk. She said that the DRS required documentation for ADHD for disability accommodations. She asked if students could get a diagnosis for ADHD at the Counseling Center for free.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that a diagnosis was available for free. She said that ADHD diagnoses required specific steps, so it would take several sessions, but that the student would not be charged for getting the diagnosis. She said that depending on an individual’s situation, ADHD was difficult to diagnose because attention difficulties could be caused by multiple things such as trauma, attention deficit disorder, depression, and anxiety. She said that the health provider needed to go through the diagnosis carefully to make sure it was correct. She said that occasionally there were complex situations where the Counseling Center might have to refer the student out which meant that the student would incur a cost.

**Alexander Novokhodko (Mechanical Engineering)** said he had two questions. He said that the GPSS lobbied the state legislature through the Grad Day on the Hill and a couple of other events. He asked if there was anything the GPSS could do to help the Counseling Center address staff or funding shortages. He asked if there were bills in the legislature of particular interest.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that it would be helpful if the UW established universal health insurance for all students. She said it was ridiculous how students who taught at the UW had insurance while those who did not did not have insurance. She said that having universal health insurance for all of our students would drive the costs down. She said that there was a law that got in the way of establishing universal health insurance for students because the law stated that if the university added a cost, it needed to pay for it. She said that the GPSS would need to figure out how to change some of the wording to create a universal health insurance program. She said that this issue was the priority. She said that the Counseling Center always needed more resources for mental health services, but that when it asked the legislature for more, the typical response was that the university just needed to allocate money differently.

**Alexander Novokhodko (Mechanical Engineering)** thanked her for her response and asked how the new funding model would affect SAF’s budget.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that the Counseling Center had talked extensively with SAF. She said that the funding model was started a couple years back. She said that the Counseling Center was just using the allocation that SAF already provided to the Counseling Center and reporting what portion of the money was used to pay for the student portion of bills. She said that, in

effect, the Counseling Center was writing off the student portion. She said that this would not change the budget for SAF at all.

**Jack Flesher (Music)** said that he recalled some of the support groups designed for graduate students required basic intake which was a barrier for him since it required him to find the time to get an appointment, make an appointment, and meet the appointment to attend a simple procrastination or perfectionism support group. He said that he saw it was no longer required for that group and asked Natacha Foo Kune to talk about what graduate student services were available without general intake.

**Natacha Foo Kune** said that the Counseling Center had transitioned most of its groups to not be full on group therapy and have it be more support groups, which meant that an intake was not required. She said that this was true of Voices, the BIPOC grief group, the perfectionism and procrastination group, and the mindfulness group, which is also quite popular among grad students.

**Natacha Foo Kune** put her email in the chat and welcomed everyone to email her with additional questions. She asked Aaron Yared to forward her more questions.

## 7. [Action] Ad Hoc Committee Governance Structure and Timeline 6:14pm

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** asked that the memorandum of understanding (MOU) be emailed out to the Senate. He said that he and the other authors of last meeting's resolution wanted to present the structure and timeline of the ad hoc committee and get the Senate's general approval for it, so that the ad hoc committee could follow the timeline. He said that he and his colleagues tried to be inclusive and considerate of what people had mentioned at the last meeting and asked everyone to share their thoughts on what he may have left out so that he could incorporate them too.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said that all ad hoc meetings would be public meetings. Thus, the meetings would follow the guidelines of the Open Public Meetings Act. He referred to the slides and said that he had planned to meet during the three Fridays listed and that each meeting would start with a public comment period. This would give people a dedicated space and time for people to speak and leave quickly, since not everyone had the time to spend at these committee meetings. He said that the voting members would be GPSS senators in attendance and anyone else who wanted to participate. He noted that non-GPSS members would not be able to vote if the ad hoc committee made a formal recommendation.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said that the purpose of the first meeting was to create a space for many of the student and community organizations that he and his colleagues were collaborating with. He said that it would also be a space also for senators to comment on



the legislation so that he and his colleagues could gather feedback and figure out how to proceed. He said that he and his colleagues would go through the legislation line by line at the next meeting and work out how the comments from the prior meeting would be reflected. He said that the topic of the final meeting on the 18th would be on implementation of the legislation and how future meetings would be arranged. He said that at that point, the ad hoc committee would issue a revised piece of legislation which would be put on the GPSS agenda.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said that he and his colleagues made some progress in regards to funding. He said that they had already secured about \$100,000 of commitments and could potentially receive \$650,000 from another source. He said that this meant that the pilot program would start with the roughly \$794,000. He welcomed everyone to ask questions or make comments.

**Meshell Sturgis** asked what Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration) planned to do if the groups identified at the December 8th meeting were not in attendance at these predetermined meeting times. She noted that the times conflicted with UW Decrim's regular meetings. She asked Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration) how much notice he would give to the groups and what follow up would happen between the invitation and the meeting.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said that the dates could be revised. He said that he and his colleagues were willing to accommodate other groups and schedule additional meetings if other groups preferred that his team join them instead. He also said that the members of the ad hoc committee would collectively write a message that would be sent to the groups identified. He said his team wanted to discuss followthrough with other groups and would be considerate of others' schedules by asking them what they wanted his team to do and how his team could provide instead of adding to other groups' workload.

**A.J. Balatico** asked Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration) about the committee's chairship. He noted that Gabby Rivera was the supervisory officer and could either delegate or take the chairship.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said that the ad hoc committee would discuss it during their first meeting. He said that at the last meeting, his team decided to start Gabby Rivera off as the chair and that she would be able to delegate later.

**Meshell Sturgis** asked for clarification on whether Matthew Mitnick's (Public Administration) team would continue with the timeline and vote on the legislation even if other groups were unable to meet with them. She asked Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration) what his next step would be if UW Decrim was unable to meet with them.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said per the last meeting, his team would have to work with other groups fully prior to putting the legislation up for a vote. He said that if there was low attendance at one of these meetings or if his team did not attend a different meeting, his

team would wait until it happened. He said that the GPSS would not vote on the legislation until his team had done everything that had been requested.

**Gabby Rivera** noted that the dates of the meeting were not final and that the resolution did not have to be voted on on February 23rd.

**Aaron Yared** noted the two week gap between each meeting and said that Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration) and his colleagues could also go to the other groups and present to them, the way SAF and the Student Technology Fee (STF) came in and presented to the GPSS to get approval and comments.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said he loved the idea and said that his team's initial email could specify that the dates were tentative. He said that the email could also include a form or poll that inquired which dates worked for the other groups. He said that he could also include language in the MOU that specifically stated that all the dates were subject to change. He said that he presented the dates so that people who were interested in attending could plan ahead.

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** motioned to approve the timeline presented with the understanding that the dates and times were subject to change. Davon Thomas (Public Administration) seconded. No objections.

**Aaron Yared** pointed out that Janis Shin (Molecular Engineering & Sciences) put a poll in the chat in regards to the question of whether or not the senators preferred fully virtual classes during the winter quarter and asked people for their input. He said that the administration responded best to hard numbers and that having quantitative data from this meeting would be very valuable at the negotiating table.

## 8. [Information] Officer and Staff Position Discussion for FY23 GPSS Budget 6:27pm

**A.J. Balatico** introduced himself as the GPSS Vice President of Finance. He prefaced the discussion by saying that the ideas he would mention were just possibilities of how the GPSS could use its general fund. He said that the GPSS currently requested the SAF for \$444,377 each year. He said that the SAF requests reached a high in FY17 which was the year after the Vice President role was split into two. He said that the current graduate student body, which comprised 16,000 students, paid about \$9/quarter for GPSS to run. He said that the majority of the GPSS's budget was focused on personnel. He said that only about \$40,000 of the budget was used for programming, and that the GPSS also received supplementary funding from other sources, such as the Provost, or the interest from the GPSS's endowment.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the SAF fee increased by 3-4% and that as long as the GPSS stayed within the 3-4% growth, it ran on a neutral budget. He noted that the GPSS had \$422,000 in its

general fund, and that \$315,000 (75% of \$422,000) of it was available for use. He said that this figure would only increase and that the GPSS had not spent a large portion of its general fund in the past couple years. He said that the most recent expenditure out of the general fund was to provide more buses for travel to Olympia a couple years ago, which had only cost a couple thousand dollars.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the GPSS could theoretically spend a lot of the general fund money and still still be left with \$100,000 in 2030. He said that there were a number of things that the GPSS could do with the money related to personnel or big events. He said that if the money was spent on a big event, the events could have a \$60,000 budget, which was three times the amount of the provost funding. He said that if the GPSS asked someone like Anthony Fauci or the Surgeon General of the U.S. to come speak, it would cost about \$100,000, but besides celebrities, no one else would cost that much. He said that the GPSS would have to have many small events every year in order to spend the money down.

**A.J. Balatico** said that there were ways to spend the money that would have a lasting impact on GPSS's structure, like adding back the secretary position or adding new staff positions. He said that the Senate could discuss what roles were not being fulfilled, and that the ideas laid out were options, not recommendations. He referred to the chart on the slides.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the initial cost for this year was in the FY23 column, and the amount of that cost minus the SAF budget increases were either 3-4% in the subsequent years. He said that if the GPSS were to get a new officer, it would also have to add an Executive Senator to balance out the executive committee. He said that the GPSS could also give a \$5 increase to staff which would raise their pay from \$18 to \$23. He said that this would be paid for through the general fund until 2029 and would be funded by SAF afterwards. He pointed out that the less the GPSS did with the general fund, the faster its SAF budget increases would catch up. He reiterated that the ideas were only options not recommendations.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the GPSS staff was paid \$18/hour without benefits and worked 19.5 hours a week for up to 660 hours a year, which was 220 hours a quarter. He said that the staff were paid above the minimum wage and the GPSS could afford to pay them more with its reserves. He said that a teaching assistant, research assistant, or staff assistant earned \$30 to \$36 with a straight salary, not including benefits. He said that the GPSS staff had more hours at a lower hourly rate than a reader/grader. He said that the College of Education offered their reader/graders the highest hourly rate at the UW at \$25.80/hour for up to 19.5 hours and said that it was a non-assistantship-based academic student employee position.

**A.J. Balatico** said that all of the GPSS staff members were graduate students, though it was not a requirement to be a graduate student. He pointed out that staff members had bachelor's degrees and therefore a higher market value, especially because the alternatives to their GPSS jobs would be doing research or teaching. He said that the staff might be tempted to go to other positions, especially from quarter to quarter. He said that the GPSS could help provide a higher

wage using its reserves and that increasing the staff's pay by \$5 would increase their overall net take-home pay by about \$3000 each year, or \$30,000 collectively.

**A.J. Balatico** flipped to the next slide about reinstatement of a secretary. He said that the GPSS had switched over from the secretary position to the Vice President of Equity and Inclusion last year, but that the GPSS could add back the secretary position. He said that many of the administrative duties were currently missing, especially over the summer. He said that internal communication between the GPSS to UW departments to onboard senators and other administrative duties were missing within the staff. He said that the GPSS had options of consolidating staff members that had similar duties to the secretary. He said that the secretary position had existed in the GPSS since 1967 and had returned the most times. He said that the position used to be a secretary/treasurer or some version of the Vice President, but always came back. He referred to a chart that showed the number of people who ran for each position and noted that the secretary position was one of the more popular positions. He noted that two of the recent former presidents had been secretaries before they became president.

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** asked if A.J. Balatico or the other officers had brainstormed a title for the secretary role. She noted that all officer positions had the word "president" in their title.

**A.J. Balatico** said that they had not. He said that the role would have "Vice President" in its title.

**Gabby Rivera** said there were a few points that would be helpful to contextualize the conversation. She said that the GPSS's budget was funded by the SAF and whatever money that was allocated but wasn't spent accumulated within the general fund. She noted that the money could only be spent on very particular things. She explained that the money from the Provost was set aside for programming and could essentially only be spent on venues, which limited how much money could be spent. She also pointed out that the GPSS had been in a pandemic for the last couple of years, so a lot of the money was not being spent for that reason.

**Gabby Rivera** said that it was worth considering that the GPSS had not had a secretary for only a quarter and a half and said that senators should consider whether or not the GPSS had had enough time to really reflect on if there was another opportunity for administrative tasks to be fulfilled in other ways across the pre-existing team. She said that regarding staff raises, she would also love to pay everybody more. She said that she would meet individually with all of the staff members over the next few weeks to go over their job descriptions again. She said that the intention was to update the job descriptions for hiring for the upcoming academic year, but that it would also provide an opportunity to reflect on which roles had the space to take on additional duties and whether or not staff members were filling the entire 19 hours, an increase from last year. She said that she had planned to give a presentation to just the Executive Committee, but that she was happy to also present to the Senate to help them make budget decisions.

**Chianaraekpere Ike (Law)** said that she had wondered why the GPSS had removed the secretary position last quarter and why the Executive Committee was having a discussion on bringing it back. She asked for more context.

**A.J. Balatico** said that part of the reason was changing the roles to shift the priority of the GPSS in regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). He said that the GPSS had also sought a budget neutral solution during the pandemic, and it would have been a very quick turnaround to add the position rather than to model different scenarios on how to finance both of them. He said that the reason he was presenting it now was because the GPSS had the money. The general fund increased by 80,000, which was more than previous years. He noted that it was not as high as the first year of the pandemic because some of the fund was given to the CARES fund. He said that personnel costs were not an exact number, because the projected tuition was different for different officers. He said that depending on the program that they were in, the figure could be higher or lower, which was why the general fund accumulated so much within a short timespan.

**A.J. Balatico** said that it was not critical that the GPSS add the secretary back, but that he wanted to entertain it to show that it would work until 2030. He noted that adding back the secretary would require a change in the Bylaws so he also wanted to give the Judicial Committee and the Elections Committee enough time to consider it.

**Chianaraekpere Ike (Law)** moved to extend the time by 5 minutes. **Meshell Sturgis** seconded. No objections.

**Chianaraekpere Ike (Law)** confirmed that it was a financial decision. She had served on the Judicial Committee last quarter and said that the Judicial Committee had discussed the possibility of keeping the secretary position as well as creating a new vice president of diversity and inclusion position when working on the changes to the Bylaws. She said that she thought the secretary position was necessary.

**Aaron Yared** said that he felt that the concept of DEI was slotted under the secretary position without a proper reason. He said that the secretary role was becoming split between the traditional secretary duties and the DEI responsibilities. He said that the Executive Committee asked itself which of the two the GPSS valued more. He said that they had decided that it would be in the GPSS's better interests to keep an officer position for equity and inclusion and divide the administrative duties amongst the officers and the staff. He said that the officers and staff had experienced some growing pains and admitted that there were some gaps that the officers had not predicted when making the Bylaw amendments last year. He said that the officers were working on it.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** said he was viewing the duties of the secretary and the duties of the vice president of diversity and inclusion. He asked Meshell Sturgis if it were possible to hire a staff person called the "Parliamentarian" under her position and whether it would benefit her or detract from her current job. He said that this would allow for a dedicated

effort taking the notes, recording the meetings, and other responsibilities without allocating \$52,000 to it.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** motioned to extend the time for 10 minutes. **Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** seconded. No objections.

**Meshell Sturgis** said that her position as the Vice President of Equity and Inclusion was not related to the secretary position at all. She said that the DEI committee had become attached to the secretary role because it was created by someone who happened to be the secretary at that time. She said that she interpreted Chianaraekpere Ike's (Law) comment as that last year the GPSS officers did not think they could convince others that DEI was important. She noted that DEI work was completely different from antiracist work. She said that the strategy was then to remove one role so that the change in positions did not have a financial impact. She said that this implied the idea that the secretary and the DEI position could be swapped out for one another, which was not the case; the two were completely separate. Meshell Sturgis said that having a staff member assigned was a whole other conversation which should happen because she was the only officer without assigned staff support.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** said that she answered his question and clarified that he was not trying to find fault in her job responsibilities. He said that he had seen the similarities in the language and had been confused.

**Aaron Yared** clarified that the position was supposed to be titled "Vice President of Equity and Accountability." He said that the accountability aspect was supposed to be in reference to parliamentary responsibilities. He said that there had been a breakdown in communication, but it wasn't supposed to be a straight replacement. He said that there was supposed to be a split of responsibilities which would allow the Vice President of Equity and Accountability focus on DEI. He said that the rest of the responsibilities had been divided up between the Vice President of Internal Affairs, the Senate Clerk, the Vice President of Finance, and his position as the president. He said that this did not end up happening and he was not sure why, but assured the Senate that these were simply growing pains to work through.

**Meshell Sturgis** said that the title of her email was "vpei," not "vpea" which was chosen by one of the GPSS's advisors. She said that after she sent the Senate an email about how the Senate was failing to support antiracist work she had been advised that people would not like it if she served as the parliamentarian because it would allegedly be too jarring for people to see those two roles operating closely together. She said that if she pointed out that something was inequitable, which happened constantly, and then called out that an item was out of time, somebody might accuse her of being reverse racist. She said that that was why A.J. Balatico was parliamentarian and why the title was changed from accountability to inclusion.

**Britahny Baskin (Neuroscience)** said that there were two different situations going on: 1) the GPSS wanted to focus on its commitment to DEI, and 2) the previous secretary position was so overloaded that it was difficult to keep up with all of the requirements of the position. She said

that these two separate things happened simultaneously. She said that in previous conversations about whether the duties should fall to a staff member versus an officer, one of the reasons why the position should be an officer position was to give a graduate student the opportunity for tuition remission. She said that an officer position would give more opportunities than a staff position and that giving these opportunities to graduate students was important specifically since the GPSS served graduate students

**Matthew Mitnick (Public Administration)** said that he had been thinking about what to do with the extra funding. He said that the GPSS did not have a full roster of senators in attendance at every meeting. He said that according to some people that he spoke with, the reason for the lack of participation was that they did not have the time to participate in governance because they were working other jobs during that time. He said that they needed income and suggested exploring a way to give senators stipends to increase participation and access for the people who did not have the ability to do this work for free.

**Aaron Yared** clarified that A.J. Balatico was not presenting a proposal. He said that this was just an introductory talk about what might end up happening later down the line.

**Alexander Novokhodko (Mechanical Engineering)** asked if the GPSS could reduce its SAFE allocation if it was financially solvent. He explained that SAF was facing an EPIC fee of \$1 million and that this measure might help keep SAF and Hall Health financially solvent.

**Aaron Yared** said that part of the consideration with trying to come up with a budget neutral option when shifting officer positions was just how financially tight SAF was.

**Janis Shin (Molecular Engineering & Sciences)** said that it did not make sense why the GPSS created a Vice President of Equity and Inclusion role and tried to put parliamentary roles under it. She noted that the previous secretary struggled to do his administrative tasks while juggling DEI work and the new person in the position had a different title but was essentially being made to do the same thing.

**Janis Shin (Molecular Engineering & Sciences)** said that she felt that the GPSS needed to hire a new person. She said that as a staff person, there were a lot of things that she saw needed to be done, like the website. She said that graduate students were students first and that it was easy to verbally commit to working 19 hours, but that school could be unpredictably difficult and time-consuming. She stressed that the GPSS needed to hire someone, whether it was a staff member or an officer, because too many things were falling through the cracks. She said that the GPSS had only gone two quarters without a secretary and asked how long the Executive Committee was going to wait. She pointed out that during the Executive Committee meeting, the officers admitted that none of last year's resolutions were forwarded to the people listed in the forwarding clause because the staff did not have the capacity.

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** said that the historical context for removing the secretary role and the adding the Vice President of Equity and Accountability

position was that the Senate was told that SAF would not approve a budget increase to cover an additional officer and Executive Senator, which would have been necessary for the balance of the Executive Committee's voting purpose. She said that it was not that the Senate did not want to support a diversity role or that they thought that the secretary's position was extraneous. She said that the treasurer had said that the SAF would not approve of it so the GPSS would not be able to afford it. She said that the Senate should ruminate on this issue. She noted that the Senate would not be making a decision today. She said that the Senate could not claim to have delegated the responsibilities that were previously handled by the secretary if the officers and staff had not actually been able to do that because of saturation.

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** said that the system had been functioning with the same number of people, but had added another body of responsibility while trying to make it work with the same number of people. She said that the GPSS should think about its priorities, what it wanted to support, and what outcomes it hoped for to benefit the group. She said that the conversation should not merely be about financial support, but also be a conversation on GPSS's values. She said that the GPSS valued the presence of a Vice President of Equity and Inclusion and had historically valued the presence of a secretary. She said that their duties had been necessary in the past and continued to be necessary for the GPSS to function at the level that everyone aspired towards.

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** said that the question that the Senate should be asking itself was "How much of it do we want? How is it that we do it?" not "Do we do it?" She said that she believed the word of the current officers and said that if things were falling through the cracks and even if the officers were in a position where they were trying to work it out and find a routine, it was apparent that more responsibilities had been added. She asked why the Senate would think that a system that was already stretched to its limits previously could do even more with the same number of people. She urged the Senate to look at the body count and make a decision about where it put its resources to increase that count.

## 9. [Information] Term Limits 7:04pm

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** said that this topic seemed like a logical next step to the matter of adding more GPSS positions. She said that the GPSS had been having recruitment issues this year. She said that the potential GPSS roster could be about 200 people, but that meetings were only attended by 40. She said that she did not know if the number had changed since the executive senator election, but that the GPSS only had 23 confirmed senators and could do better.

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** said that the GPSS was unable to control what was happening within units, but it could publicize. She said that student government should not be the best kept secret at UW. She said that term limits for officers were set at three years. She said that two-thirds of the graduate and professional student body, if not more, were students who were only at UW for two or three years. She said that limiting the term that people would be able to run or be officers would increase the opportunities for other



students to participate. She said it would increase the opportunities for stipends, funding, and tuition remission for more people. She said that one of the reasons why she wanted to be on the Elections Committee was so that the GPSS could be proactive in pushing this year's elections. She said that officer term limits were currently set at three years and that she was proposing that the GPSS amend it to one year. She said that this way the GPSS would be able to provide the most opportunities, the most officer positions, the most stipends and tuition remission opportunities in the same time frame.

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** said that during the Executive Committee meeting, one of the points brought up against this proposal was experience. She said that while a returning officer would bring knowledge directly to the table, the hope would be that a previous officer would still continue to engage with the GPSS if they were at the UW. She referred to Article 5, section B, clause 2 of the Bylaws and said that she only changed the number part. She said that GPSS officers served a 12 month term starting in June. She referred to the chart that A.J. Balatico had shared earlier and said that a standing president was a huge deterrent for someone else to run. She said that in the case that nobody else ran, the current officer could run for a second term if and only if no other graduate student declared their candidacy by the deadline imposed by the Elections Committee. She said that the actual language could be wordsmithed, but that this reflected the period of time between when the candidates' materials were due and when the Elections Committee would publicize the candidates on the GPSS website. She said that if no one had declared a position between that date and the call for candidates on the floor of the election meeting, then the officer or former officers had to make their desire known only to the Elections Committee chair directly. The Elections Committee chair would announce the former officers' candidacy at the end of the open call if and only if no other graduate or professional student had run for said office.

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** said that having an incumbent officer run again might be a huge deterrent for somebody else who was on the fence about running. She welcomed feedback from other senators. She said that if another officer was added to the GPSS Executive Committee, this amendment might also be considered at that time so that the Judicial Committee and the Elections Committee did not have to reconvene multiple times.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** said that in his four years in student government as an undergraduate student, he recognized in hindsight the gaslighting he did when he told people "If you don't have student government experience, then you shouldn't be an officer." He said that he had grown from them. He reminded everyone that there was more experience and a multitude of positions outside of the GPSS across campus. He said that the GPSS could not tell people "If you don't have GPSS experience, you don't deserve to be here," because any student, whether they were in GPSS or not, could run during an election.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** acknowledged that as a previous two-term officer, he recognized the wealth of his experience, but also believed that professional staff members were part of the institutional knowledge and could serve as a bridge between exiting officers and new

ones. He said that experience came in many forms and that student government experience was not the only relevant experience.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** asked Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences) to clarify when a term-limited officer could announce their second candidacy if no one else was running for a position. He asked if it would happen before or after floor nominations

**Ashlee Abrantes (Environmental & Forestry Sciences)** said that her idea was still in progress. She proposed that the term-limited officer seeking reelection tell the Elections Committee Chair so that if anybody else wanted to announce their candidacy from the floor, the Elections Committee Chair would know and make the declaration when they closed the floor.

**Britahny Baskin (Neuroscience)** raised a point of information and asked what the return rate for staff was. She said that if there was a lot of turnover in officers and staff, then the GPSS would lose a lot of institutional knowledge.

**Aaron Yared** said he thought that Davon Thomas (Public Administration) was referring to professional staff like Rene Singleton, William Mahoney, and Justin Camputaro, not the student staff.

**Andrew Shumway (Earth & Space Sciences)** asked Aaron Yared if he felt that he was able to do his job as the GPSS president better because of his prior experience from last year.

**Aaron Yared** said that in some areas he did. He said that he became the president after being a staff member and only having been on Seattle's campus for a year. He said that he had tried to get used to the shift between Bothell and Seattle and that his first year as the president was a culture shock. He said that there were some aspects that had been exactly the same such as the overwhelming feeling of unpreparedness right before the fall quarter started up.

**Andrew Shumway (Earth & Space Sciences)** said that based on his observations as someone who had been involved in the GPSS for four years and had served on the Elections Committee, he felt that two of the biggest problems he had seen year after year in the GPSS was a loss of institutional memory and convincing people to run for officer positions. He said he didn't think that it was a more pressing issue than having too many people running, so he was against the term limit change for that reason. He said that it was better to keep the institutional knowledge.

**Jack Flesher (Music)** said that he supported encouraging more involvement in the GPSS by making more opportunities for funding and resources to more people. He said that in his experience in student government, not just at UW but across multiple institutions, there were people who knew how things worked and guided others along. He said that these people were normally returning members, returning officers, and returning people. He expressed concern that having people sign up for things they didn't understand the scope of or if their other commitments became heavier would drive them to leave which might put the GPSS in an

unfavorable position. He said that he was open to the idea of a two year term limit as an idea. He said that while having returning members may deter people from running for that position, it would be institutionally and organizationally valuable for them to guide and help other new members since they already understood their position as opposed to everyone else.

**Aaron Yared** said that he had had the benefit of being a part of UW's system for five years before coming to Seattle. He said that he was also a part of student government for three of those five years which is how he hit the ground running when he came to UW Seattle. He said that he was also lucky enough to have been a staff member before he became an officer. He said that in a situation like COVID, having a completely fresh batch of new officers would be difficult.

**Meshell Sturgis** agreed that institutional knowledge was important as Andrew Shumway (Earth & Space Sciences) had mentioned. She pointed out that while this was her first year officially working for the GPSS, it was her fifth year knowing the GPSS. She said that most of her institutional knowledge of the GPSS had come from serving on committees and being a senator prior to her term as officer. She said that Davon Thomas' (Public Administration) point about student government experience was valid and said that senators did not tend to vote for the most qualified person, especially if they did not know them. She said that senators recognized the service of those who had served the GPSS. She said that the GPSS elections were a political arena, and that candidates needed to be known by the people. She highlighted that Aaron Yared had served as a staff member prior to his term as the president.

**Meshell Sturgis** said that in regards to the two past presidents who had previously served as secretaries, there was an opportunity not just for funding or for work experience, but that one was able to experience growth and that the student body witnessed and supported that growth. She said that in Aaron's case, the promotion could happen if someone served as a staff member and then became an officer. She said that this brought the Senate back to the last discussion about what staff members were assigned to which officer roles. She pointed out that currently, there was no staff member to promote into her role and that this caused some pressure within the GPSS.

**Britahny Baskin (Neuroscience)** referred to the matter of institutional knowledge with respect to prior to COVID. She said that she believed the officers had discussed putting a lot more information on paper, because there had not been good written instructions for officer transitions or other routine GPSS tasks. She said that priorities shifted after COVID, but that this was one potential solution for keeping institutional knowledge while having more representation in officers.

**Britahny Baskin (Neuroscience)** addressed the comment about the low representation of STEM graduate students and said she had noticed that, too. She said that as a neuroscience major, interacted with many people in STEM and said that STEM graduate students just did not have the time to be an officer if they wanted to because they did not have the time based on their obligations to their degrees. She said that the STEM students had physical obligations like

being in a lab and that the only reason why she was able to become an executive senator despite working at the veterans affairs hospital was because she was able to do it via Zoom.

**Britahny Baskin (Neuroscience)** said that many STEM graduate students had the luxury of receiving tuition remission, stipends, GAIP, and other assistance that was associated with an academic student employee, so it was not as beneficial for them to run for an officer position because they were already getting paid. She said that most of the time, the STEM graduate students did not have to worry about a paycheck or health insurance.

## 10. [Information] Programming Discussion 7:24pm

**Gabby Rivera** explained that part of her role responsibilities was event planning and programming. She said that given the unpredictable state of the quarter, she wanted to get input on how senators wanted her to proceed with event planning.

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** asked if the previous events that happened in this school year had been well attended, meaning that they had better participation than the GPSS Senate meetings? She said her intention was to make sure that Gabby Rivera did not spend energy and effort planning events for people not to attend. She said that she liked the idea of being able to spend money wildly at some point in the future. She expressed concern that the GPSS could potentially have another year without many events. She said that she remembered that the GPSS used to be recognized for hosting fantastic events. She said that she was able to do things she would never have done on her own because they were GPSS-sponsored and she did not have to spend money on them. She said that if Gabby Rivera anticipated a significant amount of participation, then she should go ahead and plan events. She recommended that Gabby Rivera wait to wildly spend money at a later date if she felt that the investment to participation ratio was too high.

**Gabby Rivera** said that previous event attendance had had a mixed amount of participation. She admitted that the provost money had arrived late into fall quarter, so the opportunities she had provided did not come with food or alcohol, which should be taken into consideration when considering the rate of event attendance. She noted that the GPSS had provided dinners during the last week of the quarter and had distributed over 100 meals within 40 minutes. She said that she believed that people would come to events, but she was more concerned about having people feel comfortable about socializing. She said that she believed that the GPSS could provide proper programming for students who craved socializing opportunities but did not know if they felt comfortable doing that yet.

**Gabby Rivera** expressed hope that spring quarter would be entirely in person. She said that the spring weather would also provide the GPSS with opportunities to be adventurous with the types of programming that it put on. She said that she believed many people would want to go crazy in spring and that the GPSS could use that to its advantage. She said that events were one of the easiest ways for the GPSS to gain name recognition.

**Aaron Yared** said lack of events made it hard to recruit new senators, too.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** encouraged Gabby Rivera to go crazy with events during spring quarter. He said that as a native Californian, he did not enjoy Washington's inclement weather. He expressed hope that spring would bring better weather and thus a larger number of events. He pointed out that the university did not know how to proceed into the next week in regard to COVID protocol and said that it was not worth Gabby Rivera's effort to plan anything this quarter unless it was a very cost-efficient online event. He reiterated Alexander Novokhodko's (Mechanical Engineering) message in the chat which said that people would show up if food was provided.

**Gabby Rivera** referred to Davon Thomas' (Public Administration) point that the UW did not have a concrete COVID protocol for next week and said that that had been a source of fluctuation and hardship for her decision-making. She said that she had to make an ethical choice on whether to plan events or not, and said that she did not want to host a GPSS event which would be designated as a superspreader.

**Aaron Yared** said that last year's vice president of internal affairs had tried to hold multiple virtual events, to which she and her staff member were the only two who attended. He said that people did not attend virtual events.

**Britahny Baskin (Neuroscience)** agreed that all the money should be spent whenever students could be in person again. She said that handing out meals last quarter was a good intermediate between hosting a large event and a virtual event. She said that more people felt comfortable with it and that GPSS had helped give people a break by giving them food. She said she did not know how much effort, time, or budget went into planning the meal distribution event, but that the meal distribution event was a good way of not being a super spreader event while still giving people a break from everything that they were going through.

## 11. [Information] Officer and Committee Reports 7:31pm

**Aaron Yared** said that President Cauce announced that she had appointed Sally Clark with the role of Director of Community Relations to reimagine campus safety. He said that this included the UW Police Department, Environmental Health & Safety, SafeCampus, Title IX, and other units. He said that Sally Clark would try to imagine how these units could fit together under one department so that all students could feel as safe as possible. He said that he and the ASUW president met with Sally Clark to get a better idea of her vision. He said that he and the ASUW president would work to give her student input on her project and that Sally Clark would visit the Senate at some point to report on her progress and direction. He clarified that this action was not a reform of any of the existing safety units. It was a set up to enact reform later down the road.

**Aaron Yared** said he would also be sitting on the committee to hire a new police chief for UWPD. He announced that his and the ASUW president's aim was to find somebody who

prioritized equity, how people of color felt in regards to UWPD, and how the UWPD could take steps to mitigate the dangers that Black and Brown students felt on campus in the presence of UWPD.

**Gabby Rivera** announced that the U-PASS committee would start meeting this quarter. She said that she was part of Student Advocates for Graduate Education ([SAGE](#)) which was trying to organize a summit for student representatives from different universities to discuss federal policies or recommendations that graduate students should advocate for. She said that SAGE was creating a committee to organize the summit and invited people to [sign up](#) to volunteer and be a part of the committee.

**Gabby Rivera** said that SAGE had also discussed how each university was responding to COVID. She said that SAGE wanted to create a list of best practices or recommendations on behalf of graduate students to send out. She noted that Theodore Cohen (Molecular Engineering & Sciences) was interested in hearing her present about the job description review and said she would consider it.

**Gabby Rivera** referred to the slides which listed the proposed events for winter quarter. She said that she was not sure how many of the events would come to fruition and said that the social mixer on the 27th would definitely be postponed, possibly to the end of March. She said that people would be able to pick up the food and hang out. She said that the GPSS would offer [discounted tickets](#) for a basketball game in collaboration with Husky Athletics. She said she was also hoping to plan something before the event.

**Gabby Rivera** said that she was planning a trivia night but had not yet confirmed a definite date with the HUB. She said that the UW Libraries and the Graduate School were hosting a [Scholars' Studio](#), an event where students did quick presentations on their thesis or studies. She said it would be an excellent way to practice public speaking skills. She said she was planning another dinner distribution event.

**Gabby Rivera** asked everyone to give her suggestions for events for the next quarter. She said she had envisioned a GPSS ice cream stand.

**Joel Anderson** introduced himself as the GPSS Policy Director. He said he was present on behalf of Payton Swinford. He said that the 2022 Washington State legislative session had started this week and that the External Team was tracking over three dozen bills. He said that the External Team was also setting up meetings with state legislators to discuss GPSS priorities, draft amendments that benefit students, and help write testimony for legislation that the GPSS supported.

**Joel Anderson** noted that the legislative session was 60 days long and asked that the senators be on the lookout for ways to help get involved in graduate and professional student advocacy, especially because legislation was moving very quickly due to the short-term nature of the session. He said that opportunities to testify on legislation were actually happening as soon as

tomorrow. He said that the current period of time was of particular importance because there was a lot of fluidity in the legislature. He said that with a number of bills being introduced daily, there were initial committee hearings being scheduled, which resulted in a lot of flexibility for legislators to include graduate and professional student priorities in legislation that had already been introduced on the floor.

**Joel Anderson** said that the first opportunity was tomorrow at 10 a.m. He said that the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee was holding a public hearing on House Bill 1736, which would establish a state based student loan program. He said that the GPSS was supporting this bill, particularly because it would offer student loans with a reduced interest rate of only 1%. He said that the bill did not initially include graduate students for consideration, but that the GPSS and the Washington Student Association had convinced the sponsor to include specific language noting graduate students as eligible for these loans. He expressed hope that the bill would pass and that graduate students were not taken out of the bill through further negotiations. He said that this would require a lot of students to come testify about how very low interest loans would benefit them. He said that he would put a [link](#) in the chat where senators could sign up to testify virtually and said that the sign up link also included instructions on how to prepare.

**Joel Anderson** said that Payton Swinford would create a longer update on other pieces of legislation relevant to the GPSS's Policy Agenda that the External Team was tracking with more opportunities to testify. He said that the Legislative Advisory Board (LAB) had also established a new meeting time for this quarter. LAB will meet on Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. virtually starting tomorrow. He said that the LAB would discuss its one-pagers tomorrow, which were advocacy sheets that the GPSS provided legislators with to outline the GPSS priorities. He welcomed all participation and input.

**Lauren Newton** explained that the Huskies on the Hill event was an opportunity for students to lobby legislators. She said that the event did not require prior experience and was planned for February 17th. She said that the External Team would host a training day on February 11th where they would explain how to lobby and give information on GPSS policies. She said that the External Team was able to move around with legislators schedules and student schedules, so students should not expect a big of a time commitment. She referred to the QR code on the screen as a way to register for the event and encouraged everyone to publicize the registration link.

**Lauren Newton** explained that the External Team was trying to make this year's training beneficial for students. She said that the training would not only cover how to lobby for GPSS's agenda, but also how students could use lobbying in their own career fields. She said that this information would also be included in an all grad-email coming up soon and invited people to email her if they had any questions.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the Finance & Budget Committee (F&B) had moved its meeting time to 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. to accommodate a longer meeting for more discussion. He said that

F&B had received several allocation requests, but that they had been canceled. He said that the art history department had recently submitted one. He announced that travel grants are open for this quarter and would be applicable for early spring conferences. He said that those who were interested in volunteering to read applications should email him. He said that the F&B needed an extra member to read applications from students whose fields were represented by current committee members to avoid conflicts of interest.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the SAF met on Friday to vote on COVID-19 mitigation funds. He said that the SAF had tentatively allocated 1.6 million out of 2 million to seven of the units listed on the slides. He said that only Student Publications and the Q Center had received a slightly reduced amount allocated to them. He said that the SAF was considering giving Hall Health the remaining \$400,000 because Hall Health had maxed out its initial cap. He said that the SAF would make the decision on Friday.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the call for proposals for the Student Tech Fee Committee (STF) was not open yet. He said that STF was conducting an internal audit for student staff members because the GPSS had voted to increase the percentage of the amount of STF funds that were allocated to maintaining the STF administration. He said that this was the prime time to discuss increasing Panopto accessibility on campus. He said that one of the issues was determining the overseer of which buildings and which rooms get Panopto. He said that it was yet to be decided whether Panopto renovations should be covered by tuition or by STF. He noted that the STF had \$7.5 million set aside for campus projects and that it could consider Panopto as a special request. He said that once the committee was able to vote on it, it could either wait until the end of this quarter or allocate the money as soon as the Office of Planning and Budgeting could transfer the money. He said that these discussions would happen on Monday.

**Meshell Sturgis** said that due to Senate Bill 5227 which mandated that higher education institutions provide DEI training to their communities. She said that a committee had been formed for the campus, and that it was in the process of hiring a program manager. She said that OMAD was separately releasing a series of virtual DEI workshops, though they might be held in-person in the future. She said that the DEI workshops were catered specifically to the Seattle campus, though students from Bothell and Tacoma could also participate. She said that she would be happy to share that link when she received it.

**Meshell Sturgis** said that one of her position's responsibilities was creating a DEI tool kit. She said that she reenvisioned the project as creating a workbench instead, as many tool kits already existed and many resources were already provided by the campus. She said that the workbench would look like a series of links or a link tree available through the GPSS website. She announced that the diversity committee was meeting next week for the first time this quarter and that the diversity funds were now live. She asked everyone to publicize the funds to those who many need it for programming.

**Meshell Sturgis** said that the Graduate School's Office of Equity and Justice was hosting an event tomorrow and asked everyone to consider attending. She said that the event was titled



“Dialogues” and that it was part of the “Dialogues for Change and Accountability” series. She said that tomorrow's event was titled “From Ally to Accomplice to End White Supremacy and Racism.” She said that it would be held at 3:00 p.m. and put the [link](#) to RSVP in the chat. She said that the events hosted by the Office of Equity and Justice were typically targeted towards staff and faculty, and that they were asking graduate students to be present to this particular one, to share their perspectives and experiences.

## 12. [Information] Announcements 7:47pm

**Marty Varela (Residential Community Student Association)** reminded everyone that Toastmasters was an international speaking communication and leadership organization. She said that the Husky Toastmasters club needed participants who wanted to build their comfort level speaking publicly. She said that she knew that many students had to give presentations, teach classes, and make compelling statements. She said that this was an opportunity for students to build these skills in a relatively affordable way. She said that the Husky Toastmasters Club offered scholarships for students that did not have the ability to pay the registration fee. She said that it was a registered student organization (RSO), so students could read about it on the RSO website. She said that the club met every Thursday from 12 to 1 p.m., encouraged everyone to check it out and out the [Zoom link](#) in the chat.

**A.J. Balatico** referred to the slides and said that there were some virtual workshops hosted by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Coalition. He said that there was no university-wide MLK Day of service events due to COVID. He said that the hygiene drive was located at Garfield High School and that there would be a virtual or socially distanced march in the parking lot around noon on that day.

**A.J. Balatico** said that the HUB would host a blood drive. He said that participants had to register and that there were about 20 spots left. He said that there was currently a shortage of blood and that about a third of blood collected through blood drives was used for cancer patients. He said that if someone had a blood type in high demand, they should sign up by typing in “UniversityofWA” in the location finder.

**Britahny Baskin (Neuroscience)** said that there was an ongoing COVID research study. She said that students would be required to fill out daily questionnaires and that participating in the study would give students access to PCR tests. She said that the results had a 12-48 hour turnaround time and that participating in the study was an easy way to support science. She encouraged those who were asymptomatic to also test to see if they had COVID asymptotically. She said that students could take tests home and that testing also happened on weekends.

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** said that American gay men had their blood questioned. He warned queer men about being careful about the regulations for blood donation.

### 13. [Action] Adjournment 7:57pm

**Davon Thomas (Public Administration)** motioned to adjourn the meeting. **Jack Flesher (Music)** seconded. No objections

Meeting minutes prepared by **Janis Shin**, GPSS Senate Clerk.