

## GPSS Finance and Budget Committee

### 2023 – 2024 Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 12, 2024 - 10:30am HUB 307

#### Present:

- Jon Choi: VP of Finance; Committee Chair
- Linh Pham: Budget Director
- Maleen Kidiwela: GPSS Executive Senator
- Joseph Rogge: GPSS Senator
- Hannah Shipman: GPSS Senator
- Franco R. Carlos: GPSS Senator
- Amanda Yapp: GPSS Senator
- Ardhra Sivasankaran: GPSS Senator
- A.J. Balatico: GPSS President, Ex-Officio
- Carrie Moore: GPSS Advisor, Ex-Officio
- Christina Coop: GPSS Advisor, Ex-Officio
- Patrick Monreal: Presenter from School of Oceanography
- Jingying Deng: Presenter from Chinese Students and Scholars Association
- Rongrong Zhu: Presenter from Chinese Students and Scholars Association

#### Not Present:

- Charles Bugre: GPSS Executive Senator
- Tiya Farah: GPSS Senator

*VP of Finance called the Meeting to order at 10:31am*

#### Overview:

**VP of Finance shared the agenda. Quorum was reached.**

#### 1. Call to Order – Approval of Agenda

- **Franco:** I motion to approve the agenda.
- **Joseph:** I second.
- **Jon:** Hearing no objections, the agenda is approved.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes:

- **Jon:** I already shared the minutes from our last meeting of the Fall quarter, but we did not go through it last week.
- **Amanda:** I motion to approve the minutes.
- **Hannah:** I second.
- **Jon:** Hearing no objections, the minutes is approved.

#### 3. Review for Departmental Allocation (School of Oceanography)

- **Jon:** For this departmental allocation, Maleen said he will recuse himself from voting.
- **Patrick:** I am here to represent the School of Oceanography and present our allocation request for the Annual Oceanography All Student Education Retreat (TOAStER).

TOASter is our annual retreat, with the aim to build strong graduate community within the school, developing professional skills, hanging out for the weekend and gaining perspectives from an invited guest speaker. The event returned last year after Covid at UW Pack Forest. But this year, it is going to be back in Friday Harbor Labs, supposedly on February 2-4. The guest speaker is an alumni working in the industry. Most of the budget comes from lodging and food from venue; Friday Harbor Labs is tradition, so we want to make that happen. We rely on a variety of fundings, including the HUB Travel Grant but this is unavailable right now, which makes the GPSS funding become more important for us to lower the cost for graduate students. We also have outside funding resources. Why TOASter? This is a regular event prior to Covid and we are trying to revitalize it. In the past, we regularly received up to \$1000 from GPSS to hold the event, and this will be the only funding required by School of Oceanography each year. Our school has close to 70 graduate students to come. Here are some regular Q&A that we prepared for the event.

- **Jon:** Since this is a Departmental Allocation, we will categorize as departmental retreat, and the funding cap is \$15/per student. Since you are expecting 45 students, and 16 non-UW oceanography guests, 45 multiplied by \$15 is less than \$750 that you are asking for.
- **Patrick:** That quote is from last year, this year we are expecting 50 or more. We are still finalizing the registration, but I am happy to give out the final list before the event.
- **Ardhra:** Departmental allocation can go up to \$1000 right, that would save some of the student's cost?
- **Jon:** We can, but we cap \$15 max per student. \$1000 is approximately for more than 65 students, or for capital expenses
- **AJ:** The dollar amount is more of the guideline, the \$1000 refers to the bylaw is that F&B can operate without going to the executive. More than \$1000 can still happen, and executive can audit if they want. The dollar amount is there just for the guideline (\$40 can't be hard, but \$16 you know might be ok). Also Friday Harbor Labs is very student-friendly space.
- **Jon:** Just to reiterate the information, School of Oceanography did receive fundings for 2019, 2020, 2022.
- **AJ:** The most similar one is the chemistry department requesting funds to go to the Rainiers game. We did end up funding \$1000 for that event.
- **Jon:** For reference, just request up to \$1000. The F&B committee can always have the option to lower that, but we might be able to give you more than \$750.

#### 4. Review for Special Allocation (Chinese Students and Scholars Association)

- **Jon:** We have Jingying and Rongrong here to represent the CSSA, and they are going to present their special allocation request for the Dragon Year Spring Festival Gala
- **Jingying & Rongrong:** We are the Director of the event and the Finance group leader. About us, CSSA was established in 1984 with more than 100 students and officers (20 of them are graduate students). We hold multiple events every year, and this year, we are hosting the NY Gala again. Here is some data about our online media presence: UWCSSA Forum with 8w+ posts, 2.2w+ membership, Instagram with 2.4k+ followers, etc. About the event, it is going to be held at UW Kane Hall 130 on February 10. The show will start at 7pm. There will be activities before the show, cultural event at 5:45 for audience to enjoy. We are expecting 500+ people to attend from around Seattle. We will also launch a live webcast to allow more people to enjoy the show with us. Here are some pictures from the event in previous years. Our show has started to recruit host, ticket selling also just started Monday, and the show intro will be out on Jan 20. About tickets, we have four types of tickets – General and VIP tickets, each has its Early Bird and Regular sale.

- **Franco:** For my department, we have 52/56 students who are Chinese international students, but as far as I know, a lot of them have not heard of the Gala. Are there any marketing plans to advertise the gala to the broader graduate community?
- **Rongrong:** We'll promote more in a couple of weeks, mostly we will do that in the WeChat group as we have lots of UW people in there.
- **AJ:** What language or dialect are used within the program?
- **Jingying:** Mostly Mandarin
- **AJ:** Did you all apply to the GPSS Diversity Fund yet?
- **Rongrong:** We got the email about that, but we are still looking into the information and application
- **Jon:** For the webcast - do you have any screenshots of what that looks like to the viewers? You can share it with me later, I am just trying to imagine how the GPSS logo will show?
- **Jingying:** We use WeChat Chanel to do the live cast so that the parents can see their student's performance. So I assume GPSS logo will show in the standees or posters, but mostly the webcast is for parents.
- **Maleen:** Have you previously received funding from HUB RSO Funding, or UWAA?
- **Rongrong:** Yes, we do. Right now, we already got them two.

## 5. Voting Discussion

- **Jon:** We will also review the two special allocations from last week. I already shared the recordings with you two, this is the chance for us to discuss about those two events. The first one is the CSA for Annual Lunar New Year Gala, one week after the CSSA's gala. The CSSA will charge for tickets, but the CSA event is free of charge. Total cost will be \$8,249 and they expect attendance of 500, of whom 50 are expected to be grad.
- **AJ:** In general, in the winter, there are chances that on some days we will have snow. Spaces, therefore, are limited on campus on certain dates, we should ask them about their plan if snow happens. That does not really impact our decisions but impact the materials we get from them afterwards.
- **Maleen:** What are the differences between CSA and CSSA?
- **Jon:** CSSA is more focused on International Chinese, mainly Mandarin in the program, and they are a NPO officially associated with the Chinese Consulate. They are both registered with the HUB
- **Jon:** We also need to review the UWEMS's request. Did everyone have a chance to watch the recording from last week?
- **Joseph:** I have not but I really should have. I will recuse myself from voting for these two organizations.
- **Jon:** Let's discuss the ones we had the chance to hear today first.

### a) School of Oceanography

- **Joseph:** It seems to me that it is a nice departmental event to organize.
- **AJ:** I think the main discussion should be whether the committee will fund the department for \$750 or \$1000.
- **Ardhra:** I would say we can go with \$1,000
- **Hannah:** With the updated attendance count, I think at least we should give them \$750, but \$1,000 is not too big of a difference.
- **Jon:** Although they didn't initially request \$1000, Maleen can make that decision to increase the request to \$1000 or not.
- **AJ:** Adding \$250 will reduce the cost of each graduate student by \$5.

- **Jon:** I can update the guideline, \$15/student can be used for decision making only.
- **Hannah:** I motion to approve this departmental request from the School of Oceanography for \$1,000
- **Joseph:** I second.
- **Jon:** So with Maleen recusing, we have 6-0-1 vote here. I will let Patrick know by EOD. Congrats to Maleen and his department.

**b) CSSA:**

- **Jon:** With their strong presence on social media and followers, it would be a good idea to have our creative director to design a post that they can share to promote GPSS to International and Chinese graduate students.
- **Maleen:** Yes, adding that as a stipulation.
- **Franco:** If we do approve their request, can we make sure that they follow up and actually make efforts to promote towards graduate students in particular? Because when I asked around my friends, they are not really aware even though they are all excited to go.
- **Jon:** Outside of social media or what?
- **Franco:** Whatever they think would be appropriate but just making sure that towards graduate student specifically.
- **Hannah:** On the line of funding charge, we can use the social media post with their design and ask them to share it with more general platforms for graduate students.
- **Jon:** The other thing we can do is to request them to share about GPSS, but for all the events that we fund through F&B, we should let Kana (our Creative & Communications Director) know so that she can collaborate with them and potentially promote them to graduate students. Any other suggestions or comments?
- **Amanda:** I am curious, how would we source that out? How would we know if it gets to graduate students? Is there a particular platform targeted at graduate students?
- **Jon:** The most reliable way to verify this would be to do a survey to graduate students during the year and gather information, such as which events that we funded are they aware of? The other thing is just to verify that they are actually posting GPSS on their social medias.
- **Ardhra:** There are some departments that are strict full of graduate and professional levels. There could be a way we can ask people in these departments what platforms they mainly use and ask the RSO to promote in those platforms.
- **Jon:** We can also promote that in the GPSS newsletter as you already brought up before Ardhra.
- **Joseph:** What kinds of stipulations we want to give them, about the advertising? I think we should be specific and brainstorm about exactly what we want from them.
- **Maleen:** I move to approve the CSSA's special allocation request for \$750 under the stipulations of the event being promoted to graduate students, mostly international and promoting GPSS on their social media platforms.
- **Joseph:** I second
- **Ardhra:** I third
- **Jon:** So we have 7-0-0 vote, and the motion is approved.

**c) CSA:**

- **Maleen:** Quick question. Is Kane Hall the only location available for students to do this large event?
- **AJ:** Yes for the size, without going to the Alaska Airline arena which cost \$50000 a day, Kane Hall is the biggest venue and affordable. The Ballrooms in the HUB are the different vibe. We do not have any mid-size. Kane Hall is designed to fit more seating and space for performances.

- **Jon:** I open the floor for any comments or questions before moving to approve?
- **Ardhra:** I motion to approve the allocation request of \$750 to the CSA
- **Franco:** I second.
- **Jon:** This motion passes unanimously, 6-0-1.

d) **UWEMS:**

- **Jon:** This one seems straightforward, strictly beneficial to graduate students. They basically provide free certifications and trainings for students. They estimate 72 graduate students to attend.
- **Maleen:** Let's just vote on it. I move to approve the UWEMS's special allocation request of \$750.
- **Franco:** I second.
- **Jon:** This motion passes unanimously, 6-0-1.

6. **FY25 Budget Draft Process Overview**

- **Jon:** During the winter quarter, we start the budget draft process for the next fiscal year (from July to June of next year). From the Bylaws, during the winter quarter, all the officers prepare the officer's requested budget. We have the overall GPSS's operating budget, which is broken down into different officer's budget. Every winter, the officers will think about what they would like to recommend for budget next year. The VPFB will meet with each of them to discuss proposed changes to their budgets and to personnel under their supervision. We consolidate that into an Officer's Requested Budget, which should be complete no later than the 5<sup>th</sup> week into the winter quarter. We will share that budget draft with the Executive Committee and the F&B committee, both will review and prepare preliminary recommendations, and then each committee must finalize the recommendations by the 10<sup>th</sup> week of the quarter to be presented to the GPSS's senate. And they will vote on it. In the upcoming weeks, I'll work with the officers to prepare the budget for next year. The committee will have the chance to listen to the presentation, provide the inputs and recommendations. For the next few weeks, it will be a back-and-forth process to make sure that we will all in an agreement on the proposed budget. Any questions?
- **Joseph:** Two things that I would like to look at would be, more specific breakdowns of GPSS's personnel budget and the records from previous years.
- **Amanda:** Specific ways to break down, also quarterly. At the beginning of the year, there will be more requests of funding for winter & spring quarters vs. summer & fall quarters, so reflecting that in the budget so that there is better understanding; when you look at those numbers you do not have to explain the difference.
- **Jon:** There is a link attached in the email to the FY25 budget draft process agenda items. In the folder, I have the bylaws and two files that I included. There we have a more detailed breakdown of the budget by the officers and the personnel's specific wages/grants/benefits. You can also see the budget for last year (2023), this year (2024). The other file that I included is the FY23 budget vs. actual. One thing for us to say how much we are going to spend, but also how much we actually spend, and what is the difference. Historically, we have typically spent less than what we budgeted for, and the remaining balance would go to the GPSS General Reserve. That fund will be used to cover any differences between our operating budget and the funding that we receive through the school (the Services and Activities fee). These two files will give you all a lot of insights that you are looking for, and you can always ask me if you need any other information.
- **AJ:** I just want to point out the variance within a budget is the actual programs that the officers are a part of. That determines what their tuition rate is as well as their academic student employee wage. For example, Jack and I use Grad tier 3 because we are

Doctorate candidates while others who do not have a master's degree yet would use Grad tier 1 as their rates, but our tuitions are all different as all officers are from different schools. We do have that variance, and we do not tend to adjust every single year as we do not know which schools each officer is from yet. Overall, we just estimate on average, and we do not know who are going to be elected. One area we should look into is how much we have in our general reserve fund, which is previously every unspent stuff, would be put into, just based on how our staff allocation works out. There is a lot more continuity with the Workday integration for our financial stuff, rather than having carry-over, it will just be whatever was not spent. It is totally different this year as it is the first year it'll happen, which will give us better clarity when we make our budget request to SAF. Our current allocation is about \$482,000 but as you saw from the chart, our expenditure could amount up to \$600,000, that's the big difference. We must dip in our general fund a few times to analyze what will be carried over.

- **Amanda:** When we are electing representatives from each position, are we considering that?
- **AJ:** We do not want that to ever happen, such that he/she is from the medical school, we do not want that as it is expensive, but it could be of the factors affecting the budget. There is a list of professional programs that have different tuitions, and if you are not part of those programs, you will just fall into the basic category. The other thing is just our general fund vs. we do have an endowment for University Advancement, that's the only interest-bearing account.
- **Jon:** Regarding the endowment and the returns, I asked the HUB Finance. The formal authority is on the GPSS President, so you have the authority to make recommendations on what to do with it, and the Executive Committee will decide.
- **Jon:** This is the balance of the GPSS general reserve, the money we do not spend out of our allocated budget. In 2019, it was around \$445,000, at the end of 2020 it was \$410,000. As you can see, in the past couple years, we spent \$63,000 and \$144,000 correspondingly. You might be why we are spending this much money. The reason for that is for example, for FY24 (this year), our operating budget is approximately \$630,000; the money we received from SAF is \$484,299, which means we have a gap of funding and expected funding of \$146,000. This amount of money will be subtracted from the reserve plus some variance that AJ mentioned regarding tuition compensation. The problem that you see is that if we subtract the deficit amount from the reserve, it will leave us with \$80,000.
- **AJ:** That's just projected amount. There is a difference between the projected amount vs. the actual expenditure.
- **Jon:** Thank you AJ for bringing that up. We do not know what we spend out of what we budget for. Last year, we did not spend as much as we had planned, which is true for most of the officer's budget. For this autumn quarter, we spent a total of \$186,000, mostly wages and benefits; so, if we do a projection based on that, the best-case scenario that we spend between \$558,000 and \$600,000. In the very worst-case scenario, we do spend as much as we budgeted for this year, that means in the following year, we will not have enough in our reserve to continue this trend of setting our operating budget around \$600,000 and receiving less than \$500,00 from SAF. That is one thing we need to consider. In the Executive committee, we briefly discussed this as well and AJ mentioned that historically our budget has been incremental by each year, this year we are going to be different.
- **AJ:** I do want to mention that last year, this budget was based on a \$30,000 SAF request but we only got \$22,700. The \$7000 might not seem that big, but for 5 years, it would be \$35000, but SAF is the only reliable funding source we have. You all as a committee will

get the numbers, but our senate will probably just get the items and the changes with last year. Usually, the SAF request would come out in one line stating which are changing. Last year, we added to travel grants and election committee, as well as the wages. My concern this year is that the wage increase is not standard, we do not have priority compared to the HUB, as they are wage workers, and they have to raise the minimum wages to conform with the law. So, we have to be very conservative, in terms of whether we go from \$24/h to \$25/h per staff as a way of compensating them. We historically cap our hours at 20 hours per week, so that international students will not have a difference in their potential earning. All of our wages are based on 20h/week

- **Amanda:** So besides from having to cut back, which we historically did not do that, what are other options or where else can we receive funding for our budget?
- **AJ:** We do not have business holdings, but that endowment back to 2012, when they were deciding whether to keep it as interest-bearing, they actually had plan to buy a house and used that as a business. We could do that but that would require us to how and who to manage it while also maintaining our independence. We can't use SAF money to make money either, but if we were fundraised independently, we would be like any other RSOs where that money will be ours to decide how we spend. The other thing to consider is not so much cutting back but more of re-organization on – when you register for class, they have a STAR fund where you could say you want to contribute to the Washington Student Association (WSA), we could theoretically get on that crowdsourcing as well. WSA is something we are already a part of.
- **Jon:** Another idea is that we can receive donations from alumni as well.
- **AJ:** That's what that endowment was, \$100,000 from those who like GPSS.
- **Amanda:** We should consider something that is more stable to be able to support us for a longer period.
- **Jon:** If you have some suggestions, this would be a great opportunity to discuss. It's probably safe to end the meeting at this point. Please reach out to me if you have any ideas or questions.
- **Franco:** A quick point of information – when should we expect to have the budget to be complete?
- **Jon:** The committee is supposed to present the final recommendations by end of this quarter, required by the bylaw. The reason why it is supposed to move quickly is because to receive money from SAF, we have to submit the budget request package, that timeline is quick, as they require us to submit by end of this month. Even in previous years, we requested extension because we have to go through the executive committee and the senate for final approval. We requested extension this year as well, and we are hoping to get the extension until March, which will give us a bit more flexibility.
- **Amanda:** Is that spreadsheet last year or current?
- **Jon:** That is from FY23, which is last year.
- **Amanda:** Do you have an updated number of their projection for next year? Or do usually give you specific figures or just an estimated percentage?
- **Jon:** For the officer's budget, it has not increased that much. I have not received any recommendations from the officers for next year yet, but we just started this process this week. We are hoping to get some proposals by next week.
- **Amanda:** What about those budget items under each officer?
- **Jon:** These budget items align with each officer's role. The officers propose how much he or she wants to use for their office in the following year. Generally, the officer term is year-to-year, and this budget is for the next officer to spend.
- **Amanda:** Thank you. I am just curious about the bases

- **Jon:** The bases are actually how much we spent in the past and are we making any changes to the programming that will impact how much we are going to spend. The other thing is, I mentioned the actual expenditures, because we have a complete picture of how much of that FY budget, we were able to spend. This year is still in progress, I'll provide the actual for that but it will not provide a complete picture. In terms of breaking down by specific quarters, we have some measures of that as you can see in the estimated budget for the VP Internal. But most of these budget items are not divided by the quarters, that presents some difficulty for projecting the spending. The primary role of this committee is to review the proposed recommendations by the officers and approve or recommend changes; secondary role we can recommend specifically how they should change. But I think it would not make sense for the F&B committee to decide what the budget should look like without inputs from officers. It has to be a collaboration, but our primary role is to guide officers in their budgeting process so that they make fiscally responsible decisions for the entire senate.
- **Amanda:** Yes I think facilitating that conversation is what we as a committee should do.
- **Maleen:** Should we ask for officer inputs in the next F&B Meeting?
- **Jon:** According to the process, it starts with officers proposing what their budget next year should look like. I am really hoping that we can get a draft by next Friday, because it is not incremental changes but significant changes this time. I do not know if we will be able to get all the inputs next Friday, but as they come in, I will be sure to share and review with our committee. I am asking all of you guys to help because as someone in the position of an officer, I might need to pull back from making strong suggestion in the committee meetings. I will try to facilitate but I want your voices to be heard. The other advisable thing is to have some officers attend our meetings so that they can present their budget proposals.
- **Amanda:** That's a great idea.
- **Jon:** One question I want to ask is that we really have to think about the mission of GPSS, which is to consolidate students' voices and communicate to school administrators. Our primary mission is not for profit, we have to make sure those activities that we consider will not deter from GPSS fulfilling its primary mission.
- **Joseph:** Even if we were to pursue some sources of generating revenues, I imagine that there would be a block of time. We would not have a huge increase in only one year. So if we focus on solving the deficit for this year only, it will be heavier on cutting down the spending.
- **Jon:** That makes a lot of sense. There is a lot of context here that you guys are just drawn into, so there are definitely a tons of questions. I hope we can address them in the upcoming weeks, but if you want to get up and speak faster, I am always open to meeting up with you guys.
- **Amanda:** I think simultaneously working on what we talked about. I do not mean to come from a business standpoint, but I do think that having a stable funding for the organization is important, so over years we will not face any deficits or challenges.
- **Jon:** I understand and agree with your perspectives. It is essential for us to consider all potential options at this point, including cutting costs or generating revenue. The gap now is a bit too big for our operating budget, so we have to make some changes. That being said, I will attain a motion to adjourn the meeting, unless you guys have any other questions.
- **Maleen:** I motion to adjourn this meeting.
- **Joseph:** I second

The meeting was adjourned at 12:06PM. VP of Finance thanked everyone who attended the meeting.