

GPSS Finance and Budget Committee

2023 – 2024 Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 19, 2024 - 10:30am HUB 307

Present:

- Jon Choi: VP of Finance; Committee Chair
- Linh Pham: Budget Director
- Maleen Kidiwela: GPSS Executive Senator
- Pratima K C: GPSS Executive Senator
- Joseph Rogge: GPSS Senator
- Hannah Shipman: GPSS Senator
- Franco R. Carlos: GPSS Senator
- Tiya Farah: GPSS Senator
- Amanda Yapp: GPSS Senator
- Ardhra Sivasankaran: GPSS Senator
- Carrie Moore: GPSS Advisor, Ex-Officio
- A.J. Balatico: GPSS President, Ex-Officio
- Victor Hsu & other presenters from TOSA
- Nika Samsavar & other presenters from Persian Circle

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

Overview:

VP of Finance gave each other the agenda. Quorum was reached.

1. Call to Order – Approval of Agenda

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

2. Approval of Minutes:

- Jon: Hopefully everyone had the chance to review the minutes from last meeting.
- Joseph: I motion to approve the meeting minutes
- Pratima: I second
- Jon: Hearing no objections, the minutes is approved

3. Review for Special Allocation (Persian Circle)

- Jon: You have about 3 minutes for your presentation, then we'll reserve 7 minutes for asking questions.
- Presenter 1: We would like to thank you all for listening to our presentation and learning more about Persian culture as well as our upcoming Nowruz event happening on March 16. We would like your help in obtaining both a DJ and a photographer for our event. So Persian Circle is the cultural is a cultural student organization aimed to promote unity among the Persian community at the University of Washington and the greater Seattle area. We do this by hosting various events and social gatherings, such as learning about

culture, practicing language skills, etc. We accept all people regardless of whether you identify as a Persian or not, as long as you are interested.

- Presenter 2: So our event is the Persian New Year, also known as the Nowruz. It is the 1st day of spring, celebrating the blooming of life. We will celebrate with family and friends, spend time singing and dancing together, eating Persian food. Dancing is core to our culture and something that we all connect with, we love celebrating our culture with other. That's the main reason we want to do this event, it is our attempt to keep the traditional life and providing a space to celebrate for those who have immigrated here.
- Presenter 3: We want to use the money you provide us for a DJ and a photographer. Over the past few years, we have been having DJ Ashkan come to our event, he created our tradition and valuable memories for all those attended. Because of what is happening right now in Iran with the women life freedom movement, we want the DJ to play the special song called Baraye. Our community has a special kind of dancing which brings us together, and without the music, we cannot practice our tradition and dance together. We celebrate dancing as a crowd, and we want to go into New Year with good energy. It is important that we have a DJ and play music to bring all the audience together. Also photographer will be capturing all those memories.
- Presenter 1: As we mentioned earlier, we are welcoming both Undergrads and Grad Students. Our Nowruz event typically has a large grad student turnout because a lot of our grad students are overseas, and this is the biggest Persian celebration. And they come and connect with people who share the same experience. This is our 14th annual celebration at Persian Circle. We have been sold out almost every single time in the past. We are partnering with several local Iranian businesses/groups in the Seattle area. Also, even though we are a Persian club, but anyone is welcome here to come. Among 300 attendees, we expect about 80-100 graduate students. These are some photos from the past. Thank you so much for listening.
- Joseph: How do you track who are graduate students among your attendees?
- Presenter: We are thinking to do RSVP, we might have a box for them to check whether they are undergraduate or graduate students. In the past, we charged the tickets differently based on your student status, but we will not do that this year.
- Jon: I just checked, and you guys did also apply for the GPSS Diversity Fund. There's also another option that AJ mentioned, you guys can request \$400 now and later you can apply for another round of funding. But if this is the one big thing you guys throw and want to use the full amount of \$750, that's fine too.
- Presenter: We will go with the latter as this is our most important event of the year.
- Pratima: This seems a very fun event to provide the community to the students. You mentioned this is the 4th event going on. Do you know how it started and how it managed to get the fund. What are other funds that you guys requested, as the total cost seems high.
- Presenter: To correct, we have done this 13th other time, this is our 14th event. And I believe we've requested funding from GPSS in prior years. But in terms of other funds, we also requesting funds elsewhere.
- Jon: I also saw on the request that you received funding from us last year as well. And in terms of total event cost, yours is on the lower side.
- Jon: This question is just for my understanding, but why is this Persian Circle?
- Presenter: There's also a PSA – Pakistani Student Association, and we are not allowed to have the same name.
- Jon: My question is why it is Persian Circle, instead of Irani?

- Presenter: It is really because it's synonymous. I can go back to the history if you insist on knowing, but it's really the same thing, and Persian is easier to say. At the same time, Persian is more encompassing too, so we like to include everyone as a whole.
- Maleen: So, you guys said that this is a community event, so there will be families and children right?
- Presenter: Yes, for sure. We have both young and old generations
- Jon: For the photographer, did you guys consider an option of having a volunteer photographer?
- Presenter: We just go with the same person every year. He enjoys doing it for us and the cost is typically less than what is normally charged. I am not sure if we can ask him to be volunteer because it involves a lot of work for him, and he's been with us for a long time.
- AJ: I have a question about the event venue – UW Tower. It's on campus, and that building normally requires swipe-in. Is there an arrangement for security so that public, non-UW people come in?
- Presenter: A part of what the UW Tower charges requires us to hire a student member who will be in charge of checking the tickets and swiping people in.
- Jon: We're approaching the end of our time. Any last minute questions?
- Hannah: Have you been sponsored by GPSS in the past?
- Jon: Yes, they have.
- Hannah: So do you plan to put GPSS logo on promotion materials or social media posts?
- Presenter: When we announce our event, it is mainly through Instagram or Facebook as well. We have other sponsors that are asking the same request. Therefore, we'll ask you guys to send that over, probably in February, so we can include in our posts when we announce the event.
- Jon: That's great. What we started doing recently is that once RSO gets approved for the funding, we also connect you guys with our Creative Director and Social Media Coordinator so that we can do some cross-promotion among graduate students. Thank you so much for coming, and we'll decide your request later. I'll sure to let you know by end of today

4. Review for Special Allocation (Taiwanese Oversea Students Association)

- Jon: Next, we will have TOSA coming up. They are hosting an event called Timeless Taiwan. Eric and Victor are the representatives from the RSO. Feel free to take it away.
- Eric: Hi – I am the President, that's our promotional poster for our Timeless Taiwan event this year, which is a grand event. The turnout rate last year was about 3000 participants. TOSA usually has other minor events throughout quarters, but this is our biggest event. Officers have to be in charge of cooking the food from Taiwanese cuisine, throwing activities. Highlight of the event would be a celebrity that flies over from Taiwan, and this year we finalized on Ozi.
- Victor: The aim of this event is to celebrate the rich culture of Taiwan. We've been doing this event since 2018, so this is our 6th celebration, so we have a lot of experience in event planning, food safety, etc. We also collaborate with local food vendors in Seattle, and we will also invite a famous Taiwanese singer. In short, this will be a unique opportunity for anyone who appreciates and wants to learn more about Taiwanese culture, including both undergraduate and graduate students. The event will be hosted in the HUB Ballrooms, and we'll be very busy in handling all the logistics. We want to request \$750, which will be mainly used to cover the facility rental fee, around \$7000 for us.
- Jon: You have about 1 minute left.
- Eric: Our event focuses on 3 things – culture, community, engagement. Regarding the graduate engagement of this event, we wish to talk about how this event invites a lot of people around Seattle. You can see a lot of graduates and alumni, a lot of them come

back here to visit the event. We will also host this event on the same day with the Chinese Lunar New Year, we anticipate a lot of students whether they are away from home or just want to learn more about culture exchange.

- Jon: We'll open up for Q&A now. I do want to make a note, we approved funding for the CSSA, and they are going to have the event on the same day as your event.
- Eric: We have a very close connection with CSSA, and we do cross-promotion.
- Jon: Can I also ask about the difference between TOSA and TSA?
- Eric: TOSA is more international I'd say as we have more students from abroad. TSA has more students based in America. Over the past few years, when recruitment comes along, there is definitely a mix of both now, so the similarity is closer recently. In short, one is more Taiwanese native, one is more Chinese American, but this event used to be a joint event until there was some issue back in the day.
- Jon: Is the primary programming Mandarin then?
- Eric: No, we do have MC, Chinese and English.
- Jon: I appreciate the clarification.
- Joseph: How are you going to track how many of your attendees are UW grads?
- Victor: We do have the check-in survey at pre-sale points where attendees can identify their academic status.
- Maleen: So is this kind of a singing only event, or do you have food?
- Eric: It's kind of a night market, but indoor. Officers are in charge of food, and there are also vendors from across Seattle that sell Taiwanese food. And there are also 7 activity booths and different performances.
- Maleen: Going forward, are you aware of our promotional/sponsorship stipulations?
- Eric: Definitely. We will have a post for our sponsors soon, which will include all the logos and our MC will also make a shout-out at the event.
- AJ: Have you also signed up for GPSS Diversity Fund because the deadline is approaching soon. It's another \$500, same process but with a different group
- Victor: I just submitted the application yesterday.
- Jon: That's great. Any last minute questions?
- Maleen: So most of the cost will be used for venue?
- Eric: I'd say most for the celebrity, which costs \$18000 approximately. That's one of our traditions, we always wish to invite a famous singer from Taiwan to fly over and celebrate with us.
- Jon: Have you guys already started the pre-sale?
- Eric: We just started recently, a few days ago. That'll be rolling, and there will be online & in person options. Since we cannot exchange cash on the day of the event, we do voucher system instead (\$1 equals to 1 voucher)
- Jon: So ticket sales would be \$5 per ticket?
- Victor: So the admission will be free, but we use vouchers – and the vouchers are increments of \$5. HUB does not allow you to pay with cash, so vouchers will be purchased to buy food/drinks.
- Maleen: As you anticipate a turnout of 3000 people, that will probably add up to \$15000 voucher sales. You still have a lot of money left to cover the cost?
- Jon: I have their budget sheet. They also have \$7000 from external funding, then all the fundings from other UW sponsorship. They are also anticipating to generate about \$18000 in ticket sale.
- Victor: We expect the turnout rate to increase compared to last year, as the singer this year is very well-known in Taiwan. We also open a VIP area in front of the stage, and I think there is a big intention among audience to purchase closer seats to see the singer.

- Maleen: What about security?
- Eric: We'll be having a meeting with HUB later to discuss about security as well as how the event will be facilitated throughout the night.
- Jon: Eric and Victor, thank you so much for presentation. We will discuss as a committee and let you know our decision by end of day. It sounds like an interesting event.

5. Voting Discussion

A. Persian Circle

- Jon: Let's begin by discussing the Persian Circle's Nowruz event. Anyone having any comments?
- Pratima: I just want to comment that this is a good program, they are creating a community for students wanting to celebrate New Year. Being an international student, I really understand the value of having these organizations and events.
- Joseph: Almost half of the student attendee will be graduate students
- Jon: Is Persian community kind of a minority on campus, aren't they?
- AJ: Besides Chinese & Indians, they are up there in terms of representation, very high concentration of Engineering students.
- Jon: Do we feel comfortable putting this event to a vote?
- Pratima: Yes, I think so. If nobody has objections, I can make a motion to approve Persian Circle's request of \$750.
- Joseph: I second.
- Jon: Those in favor, say I or raise your hands.
- Jon: It sounds like we have a 8-0-1 vote here. Franco is recusing as he missed the presentation. This is approved

B. TOSA

- Jon: It's very interesting. I did not know that they have one association directed more towards international students, and another one more towards domestic/Taiwanese American students
- Joseph: I am also surprised that they share a group chat with the CSSA and promote each other's event.
- Pratima: This seems to be a large event, and they will be welcoming everyone not limited to Taiwanese. They also received fundings from us in the past
- Jon: I have one idea – since they are generating revenue from this event, there might be a slim chance of profit. In case they do, we can put a stipulation to refund us a portion of the profit.
- Pratima: I think they said that the money generating from ticket sale will be carried towards the next year for the organization. The \$27000 cost is not a small event
- Jon: I'd say it is the most expensive event we have seen so far for this year.
- Joseph: I would be just giving them \$750
- Jon: Anyone feels comfortable putting a motion?
- Joseph: I move to approve the TOSA's request of \$750 for their Timeless Taiwan event
- Maleen: I second.
- Jon: All those in favor, please raise your hands. Okay we have a 9-0-0 approval.

6. FY25 Budget Draft Discussion

- Jon: I did not change the slides from last week, only added this one from the GPSS Senate meeting.
- Maleen: This might be an unrelated question, but before this quarter, how much money did we give out?
- Jon: As of Jan 9, we had transferred out \$12350 out of \$57000 including Travel Grants as well.
- Jon: This is our budget for this fiscal year. I took my best estimates of how much we might spend based on last year's spending and our trajectory this quarter. There was a point AJ brought up about the tuition differentials, I think our tuition estimates are probably on the low end, while our actuals will be higher. That's one area we are going to spend more than we expected.
- AJ: For summer salaries, they should be all consistently close to \$7250. Why is there so much variance?
- Jon: Are you talking about the differences among the officers? Personally, I worked a lot less than everyone did.
- AJ: For example, why is President \$5880 vs. \$6000, etc. Are they supposed to be theoretically the same? What is the cause of that discrepancy?
- Jon: Maybe some people reported more hours than others. I put these numbers down from the transactions I got from HUB Finance.
- AJ: So, this could also be related to the term of the fiscal year. Is this for the actual calendar year from January or just from July 1st? Regarding our reporting, I think we should stick to the standard and include the term to avoid causing any inconsistency. I might have reported hours before June 30th, which could have accounted for the discrepancy in those numbers.
- Jon: So Carrie, from HUB Finance's perspectives, is this easier if we align the term from July to June as a fiscal year?
- Carrie: That makes sense.
- Jon: I will add their summer hours from June to her, and theoretically it should balance.
- Pratima: I have a question – The tuition waivers for the officers depend on the department, the salary will be same for all the officers regardless of their tuition rate?
- Jon: Salaries are a little different as well, depending on the programs.
- AJ: For example, the master's students typically get around \$29/hr, while PhD candidates get around \$32/hr.
- Pratima: So that means there will be some difference in salaries depending on the department?
- Jon: I'd say depending on the programs, and slightly depending on the departments as well. These salaries are consistent as they are by the hours. I actually have to look into the benefit as it was quite high.
- AJ: The benefit is 20.4% of whatever wages we pay out, not including tuition
- Jon: For officers, I understand that we have benefits, but what about staff?
- AJ: It's a complicated thing if these are like full-time workers at UW, the rate would be 30%. To offset the difference, we could hire somebody as a professional worker, but we do not. The reason why that's just the constant benefit they have for any student
- Jon: Matthew (the VP of Equity & Inclusion) and I talked about one idea that will potentially lower cost for officers would be converting officers, basically instead of tuition compensation but increasing the hourly wage. However, because of the benefits, now I think that could potentially increase cost.
- AJ: Yes.
- Pratima: So how much is the total for the Diversity fund?

- Jon: \$7000
- Pratima: Is it separate from the Special Allocations?
- AJ: Yes, it is part of the VP of Equity & Inclusion's budget. Historically, they did not have a separate budget number for it. We did not have the fund until recently.
- Pratima: Are we reviewing this to pass or just reviewing to continue working on this?
- Jon: Just reviewing and brainstorming for now. The way it works is that the officers will draft their budget estimates, we review as a committee and make recommendations on that. The officers are still working on their budgets for now.
- Joseph: By when do we have to present to the Senators? The 5th week of this quarter?
- Jon: No, the officers present their budget by the 5th week to the F&B Committee and the Exec Committee. We need to approve and make final recommendations by the 10th week. Also, we are able to get the extension by SAF till the end of the quarter, so the time constraint is mitigated now. We should take this time to discuss what are some of the options we have, what can we brainstorm to close the gap between what we get funded and what we are going to spend. The other thing I learnt recently is that out of the \$226,000 we had, \$25,000 is locked up in a liability fund that we are not allowed to touch, that will continue onto the next years. So, the money we can touch is around \$200,000. There are different parts of the budget, these officer budgets will definitely going to underspend by probably half.
- AJ: For the most parts. I think it's a categorization issue. The General fund is not up there. For example, I have a discretionary fund I do not use because typically I use general fund. The other thing is that our line items sometimes might not cover – last year, we had to ask the senate for another \$10,000 because the programming budget, even though we had the money overall, it did not fit into a single category. My concern is the timing of the reporting. The difference between FY22 and FY23 budgets should not be that \$50,000 but because of reporting, that might have shown a bigger deficit. There are also other funding sources that are not reflected but they are not supposed to be as they are separate funds. So, that requires a bit more consideration
- Jon: We are at 11:32, I really wanted to talk about our committee lunch. Carrie recently offered us some funding so that we can have lunch together as a committee. It seems like the most preferable way is for us to have lunch after the F&B meeting. Does that work for most of you?
- Maleen: Is it going to be next week?
- Jon: We can decide on that, whether it's next week or the week after. Anytime we meet this quarter. I will also ask the people who already left. The easiest way is to order pizzas from downstairs and have them deliver for us. Does anyone have any items they want to bring up before we adjourn?
- Joseph: I move to adjourn the meeting
- Maleen: I second.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:34. VP of Finance thanked every committee member.