

GPSS Finance and Budget Committee

2023 – 2024 Meeting Minutes

Friday, Feb 16, 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
- Franco R. Carlos: GPSS Senator
- Amanda Yapp: GPSS Senator
- Tiya Farah: GPSS Senator
- A.J. Balatico: GPSS President
- Matthew Moran: GPSS VP of Equity & Inclusion
- Tava Kairaiuak: Presenter from First Nations at UW
- Derek Crescenti: Presenter from the Dance Department

Not Present:

- Ardhra Sivasankaran: GPSS Senator
- Hannah Shipman: GPSS Senator

VP of Finance called the Meeting to order at 10:35am

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
- Maleen: I second
- Jon: Hearing no objections, the agenda is approved

2. Approval of Minutes:

- Jon: We also need to approve the minutes from last week
- Joseph: I motion to approve the meeting minutes
- Maleen: I second
- Jon: Hearing no objections, the minutes is approved. I'd like to add an agenda item – we invited some officers from GPSS to come and talk about their perspectives on the budget. Here we have A.J. and Matthew, I'd like to have them talk before we go into the special allocations

3. FY25 Budget Discussion

- Jon: Let's me pull up the budget and have the committee members ask you two questions
- Matthew: Sure

- Jon: It's the summary of the budget that the officers passed. I made a little adjustment on my personnel for the fringe benefits, so it came down to \$578,000 for the SAF portion. According to our projection, if that's the case and we have \$93,000 leftover in the reserve, technically we should clear with about \$6000 in excess, but we have to subtract \$25,000 from the liability fund. It is dependent on a couple of factors – personnel is based on average right now, so if we exceed that average as we've done in the past few years, we are coming too close to spending all the budget we have. Maybe we can start with that and Matthew, you can share your perspectives.
- Matthew: Happy to answer any questions
- Joseph: Last week, HUB Finance & Accounting came talk to us and we are at risk of spending much more than we budget and revenue generation. We have to make some cuts, one thing we discussed was reorganization GPSS. One question would be what are your thoughts on your position getting integrated with another? What do you think is essential?
- Matthew: I think the way GPSS is structured right now is ideal, the amount of work each officer handles is reasonable and important. Cutting positions might sound like a good idea, but in practice, it has a lot of consequences. For example, every year we have to work on bylaws changes, or secondly, it might violate our values. An officer is selected and has responsibility designed for that position, we only work 19 hours, but it's more than that and we do it because we value the work/benefits for students. I think we can look at fixing other factors in budget, and I'll also say at the end of the day, it's us that decide what our budget should look like, regardless of what others say
- Pratima: I have been in GPSS for 4+ years now, there were not always 6 officers in GPSS. Two years ago, we added the VP of Admin, by that time, we were during Covid, so lots of events could not happen and a lot of funds went to the Reserve fund. During the discussion back then, lots of Senators were concerned that if GPSS added another officer, what if in the future, GPSS will run out of fund? Also it seems like the amount we get from SAF is also less than what they used to give us previously. Matthew, to your point you are saying yes, we need the staff for working. But what if GPSS is running out of the fund and we never get the fun and there are no officers to be paid. I think it would be the best situation to have less officers so that GPSS can run smoothly, then meaning to have like more than 80% of the GPSS budget allocated to the personnel and then GPSS is running out of the business. So, I think I also agree with Joseph that we need to merge. The F&B committee has been talking about this too, merging one of the positions, not necessarily this or that. I think I have talked with the previous year's VP of the E&I, your position, Matthew and I've talked how much of the workload it is and this is also a new position created, not created, I think the title was changed. So, I think there should be some possibility to merge and reduce the workload as the 19 hours for work. And then just saying like we want all the officers and GPSS is running out of the budget. There will be my input. Thank you.
- Matthew: Well, a couple of things for that. I think, from the vice versa admin position wasn't just created for the purpose of creating it was created because there were a lot of administrative issues. So for example, if you look at Jack's emails, you can see how a lot of work it requires to get us started in the year, such as reach out to every department, or sending 60, 70 emails and engaging with those departments on a personal level, so that we get that outreach. When it comes to maintaining our senate and reaching out to departments to get people on there. That's all through Jack and all that administrative back end was important. The reason why that was created was because a secretary who was just a staff member couldn't do that on their own. I mean, administrative work is difficult, and we did that because of issues related to that. It was just overwhelming

people, and we had that consistent issue. So that's why it was created. And there I don't have the legislation from me, but when it was passed, there was a financial plan for when the VP of Administration position was created, so that we'd be spending down our reserves until I believe 2027. And by that point of time, we'd be expected to with the staff increases to be at that point. Now obviously, with the pandemic and inflation, things have changed a little bit on that end. So, it's a little bit sooner than expected, creating this kind of odd gap. But I don't believe that, you know, cutting an officer position is the only thing to think about because there are other things we can think of as well. Whether it be other staff positions, whether it be officer summer, I mean there's plenty of other things we can talk about as well. Because when you cut off an officer, that's someone who is working an entire year, trying to represent grad students across campus when we don't get that support. And I think it's important that instead of merging an officer position, we have other ways we can do that. Because once you remove that officer position, things will run differently and it will be harder because it's one less person who's dedicated every single day for a year to this job and it's not just a part time thing and just, you know, doing. So I think that's important to know

- Pratima: No, I read the Jon's comment and Fine I will ask later.
- Jon: I just wanted to give you an opportunity to come and present your viewpoints. I think before we get deep into the budget discussions, I want us to get through some of the application materials since we already have some guests.
- Matthew: Yeah. I think that there's a few things to do. And I encourage before any decisions like that are made is one sooner than later, right. I've been working and we're about to be in judicial about elections, and to get those bylaws get to the Senate on March. So, these big changes, if that's what you decide to pursue. Those discussions need to happen quickly because we don't want something to go out and rescind or change things. That's not great. But I also encourage you all to talk to officers or in the office. I love talking to people. So please come in and talk to me because I think having an understanding of what each of us does on a day and the work we do and how passionate we are for GPSS and to represent grad students is important. And I think that there's a lot of things we can do. And cutting an officer position is just one idea that can happen. I think that there's other things we can do as well. And of course A.J. is here but like I said, if you ever want to talk to me, we're in my office hours or outside. I'm always happy.
- Jon: Thank Matthew. All right, we're going to move on to other sections of our programming. And first we will start with Tava, who is online here today to talk about the First Nations 53rd Annual Spring Powwow event.

4. Special Allocation Request – First Nations @UW

- Tava: Yeah, my name is Tava. I am a fourth year ESRM student. I'm the fundraising chair for First Nations this year and we're asking for \$750 to fund our annual spring Powwow. So, yeah, this panel started in 1971. Starting with AISC, the American Indian student commission, but First Nations took it over in 1989. It's the largest Powwow in Washington. And we really look forward to putting this on every year for native students on campus and for our families that are around here. So Powwow basically is an inner tribal event for Native people. A powwow can look different depending on where you're from, but in ours, we do a lot of dancing, singing and ceremony. We do dance specials which are usually sponsored by families in the Washington. We do an elders dinner where we honor elders in our community and then we also celebrate our students that are graduating every year. But yeah, this is a large powwow we expect. Last year, we had about 2700 people but that was just because we had a one-day powwow. This year we anticipate 5000 to 6000 people to attend. The powwow is as you can imagine a very

expensive event to put on. We're looking at about \$90,000 this year. That is just because we had an agreement that is kind of falling through with the Office of Tribal Relations to kind of rent and carpet for events. So, we are asking for a little bit more funding this year but yeah, so the biggest way that grad students can be involved with our Powwow is through volunteering. It's a great volunteer opportunity. There are a lot of volunteer positions that happen in our powwow just because we need a lot of people to help. There's frybread running so I don't know if you know frybread is but basically, you're just shaping dough and frying it so that we can serve it to the community members. There's Mike holding, so when people are singing and drumming with people holding mics. We have people kind of floating and helping where we need them, at the volunteer station, at concessions, helping out vendors and things like that. Also, powwow is put on with the help of a lot of grad students. A lot of grad students in the native community at UW, actually were formally officers for First Nations, so they kind of have a lot of knowledge regarding how to put on the Powwow. So yeah. Yeah. Are there any questions?

- Jon: You are right on time.
- Joseph: Thanks for coming to talk to us. So, what specifically is the \$750 going to use for? Because John, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think last week someone from finance told us that, like the only allocation we can approve for at least the rest of the quarter is like room reservations. So, like reserving some facility on campus? So, what originally was the plan for this?
- Tava: I think from originally, we wanted to use this possibly for honorarium to pay some of the guests that we bring, or to pay our drum group that we have performing. I think that was the original plan.
- Jon: This application came before that kind of exemption, but it's a good question to ask
- Joseph: For the Hec Edmundson pavilion, is that something that you'd have to reserve from the university?
- Tava: Yeah, so we have a standing agreement with the University that the second week of April, we have the arena booked, and because that is our largest expense and thankfully OMAD they actually give us money every year. So that we can rent that facility.
- Joseph: So, it is covered by OMAD?
- Tava: Yes
- Coop: I am the advisor for First Nations. One part of their infrastructure costs also include event insurance. They'd have to pay for first responder presence and having people to traffic management, loading dock, those all have a cost associated with that we would have recognized our facility costs are part of the key they can't they literally can't have their benefit get. They don't have all those things. So, when their requests got forwarded for hearing, so these are kinds of things that that our office can accommodate. Because they are campus services.
- Jon: Thanks for clarifying Coop. All of these applications, by the way, before they come to this committee, they get reviewed by SAO advisors, so they can also let us know if it's not something that they can support right now
- Pratima: Thank you Tava and sounds like a great event. I was just wondering that it is open for UW students too?
- Tava: Yes.
- Pratima: Okay and there is no entrance fee?
- Tava: No, it's open to public. So, if anyone knows this event is happening, they can just go.
- Pratima: How are you advertising the even
- Tava: We have posted a save the date to our social media. We are also working with an artist right now to release our official flyer. We're hoping that'll be out hopefully next

week or the week after. So, in the next two weeks, we're hoping to get that out. We usually use social media, word of mouth and then kind of posting flyers throughout campus.

- Jon: Could I ask you, I know you kind of went into it at the beginning of your presentation, but what does powwow stand for it like what does it mean?
- Tava: Um, there's not really one definition for powwow. Powwow was originated in like the clan cultures in the US but just due to a lot of different cultural shifts and things like that they become very intertribal. So, powwow just kind of means a gathering and like bringing together community for like, all native people down here. So yeah, so it originated as something but now it's kind of turned into just a big dance gathering where we all just hang out together and enjoy each other's company.
- Jon: Thanks for teaching me. All right. I think we have room for maybe one extra question and then we can wrap this up and move to the next section. Okay, Tava, thank you so much for your time coming to the presentation. Later in this meeting, we'll discuss your application and we'll let you know what happens by email.
- Tava: Awesome.

5. Departmental Allocation – Dance Department

- Jon: Let me first introduce one of our GPSS senators, Derek representing the Dance Department. Do you want to introduce yourself real quick?
- Derek: Yeah, so I'm Derek presenting, first year grad student dance department. We have a departmental allocation requests this year for some upgrades and capital improvements to our space. I just wanted to start just by telling us telling you all who we are. We are eight grad students. That's us. It's a two-year program, eight consecutive quarters so moves by pretty quickly. We all have teaching assignments as pre-doctoral instructors or teaching assistants, so our time consists of coursework, creative work, and teaching activities. This is our space. It's in the very deep depths of Meany Hall. It is designed in the round, so our desks are all facing one another which is creating a space for collaboration working together. And within the middle, there's where we do a lot of our class prep, stretching, cooling down, working together on creative projects. So, there's a lot that happens within that center space. So, our needs are a better surface to work on. Right now. It has one of those old carpets that has been there for many, many years. It's difficult to dance on and hurts a little bit. It has stains and as you saw on our previous slide, it's a spot within the space that we put our toes on and our faces on, so we get really down on there. We need a softer landing point and a more hospitable environment for us to work on. So, we're looking to upgrade back in there. We're also looking to upgrade our food storage. Right now, we have the first refrigerator ever made. And it's sitting in the corner there. The second photo down there you can see that that is how we maintain the temperature and it's falling off. So, it's only a matter of days, weeks or quarters before it no longer works and we want to get ahead of it. So, our capital purchases include this beautiful area rug, which is durable, it's very large so that it will fit that whole space to maximize the number of dancers and students who can work on it. And then refrigerator, which is a basic model, just meant to keep our food cold, nothing fancy. Our budget, we are asking for the maximum \$1,000. We have not asked for money for departmental allocations anytime in the recent past, so we're going for a full ask this year. The nature of the quickness that the turnaround of the department has is that you know I'm not sure when we'll be able to kind of propose these improvements again. So, I want to make sure that we kind of do what we can. We have the Department of Dance willing to fill in the gap. Their budget does go over \$1,000 because of delivery costs. They are going to provide that given that GPSS does fully fund us. That's what we're hoping for so I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

- AJ: So GPSS recently bought a refrigerator, and it was about 700. What dimension or metric are you optimizing for so is it space or is it the sustainability?
- Derek: I went for whatever would fit the budget. The department can't really give us any more money than really filling in the gaps there. The rug is super important to us. And large area rugs are quite expensive, especially if you want one that's durable. It's an inside outside carpet. So it will last and so I tried to find a refrigerator that fit within there without trying to ask the dance department for too much more. We're going for just big enough to fit our food in that has both a freezer and a refrigerator. I admit that I did not look into sustainability.
- AJ: Because that was one of the concerns again, when the refrigerator came to F&B Previously, it was about like a refrigerator should be there for several years. So, would your department consider upgrading it so that it's like one of the more energy efficient ones or it's more efficient just because it's bigger?
- Derek: Yeah. We don't really need a large refrigerator. It feels like you know, if we're looking for efficiency or something that's environmentally safe that you know, bolstering and lifting the budget to support that seems meaningful, but as far as size is concerned, we don't need anything fancy or large. We just need to keep our food cold. And I will admit I did just go for what could fit into the budget now. This refrigerator does have fantastic ratings for the price point. And I don't think more expensive always mean better. This one, I think will last probably several, maybe a decade or so. You know, refrigerators lasted a while. Yeah, but I would be willing to ask the dance department if they would throw down a little bit more money if we if that was important to Budget Committee.
- Pratima: I wanted to say in past for the departmental allocations, we have gone a bit over \$1000 in the case it was really presented well, or like AJ mentioned maybe the sustainable phrases something that the university would want. So, if that is 700. How much increase, it seems like it's \$450 right now. Yes. So, there will be \$300 increase in the GPSS budget will cover that \$700. So just seeing if it is the good thing for holding environment and university, I would say that I think GPSS has done over \$1000 before, so maybe we should consider doing full some, so the dance department get the \$700 freezer which is more sustainable than the cheaper one.
- Derek: Thank you. I appreciate that point. Because in the application description, it said if it went over 1000 It would need executive approval and I'm not familiar with that process. So I avoided it.
- Jon: I can quickly explain. It's basically we have this F&B committee, but we also have the executive committee filled with the officers and the executive senators. So, if it goes over that amount and F&B approves that, then that also has to just get concurrent approval from the executive committee. That's what it means.
- Derek: Right. And our department administrator, Ed, he's like an amazing person, and he would be an asset in helping me locate a refrigerator that would match our specs that we need, would be more sustainable, and would be lasting for our graduate office. And then if we were able to lift the budget to a higher level, we could find space for that and create that budget line at \$700
- Jon: So that would be \$300 extra?
- Derek: Yes, I did see many refrigerators at that price point. I went the one right below this for this ask.
- AJ: For history, we did that for the art history department, who had their symposium plus they wanted a projector so we approved up for like \$1500. In this case, I'm not making a recommendation but since we don't know the price of the refrigerator, when you set the

price for any recommendations, you should probably take that into account because we don't want to have to reapprove something if it is over.

- Pratima: I'd suggest \$1300, so if it's \$15 or \$20 more, they could even use it to cover that \$46 delivery too
- Derek: I appreciate that, and the Dance department are willing to fill in the gaps there. They just like to see that we put in the work and are working with student groups across campus to fund things and aren't just asking from them.
- Jon: Maybe time for one more question. But seems like the community is very well informed and in consensus. So perhaps we could end there. We're going to review. We're going to discuss your presentation and application. And then once we decide I'll be sure to let you know by email.

6. Voting

I. First Nations at UW

- Jon: So let's start with the First Nations requests for the Powwow. What do you guys think?
- Pratima: Looks great. I think we should fund
- Joseph: It sounds like a really nice community event. I agree that we should fund it.
- Pratima: I would like to make a motion to provide \$750 funding to the First Nations at UW
- Joseph: I second
- Jon: 7-0-0. We'll let them know

II. Dance Department

- Jon: I think we have a couple of choices. So, like what Pratima said, we can approve it for up to \$1300 and then ask that their department cover the remaining costs. I think we could also do it so that like we approve up to a certain amount. And we allocate to them like whatever. You know, they find that like whatever their final quote is, so if their final quote is under that amount, then it should be fine. That will just apply that amount. So whichever way.
- Pratima: So I think looking at the plus minus I don't know if there is another any discussion people want to do otherwise I would like to make a motion to go for a vote. Okay, I would like to make a motion to approve for \$1400, so they have the plus and minus savings that they don't have to return to us again. Or we are like didn't fund them for fully make a motion of providing the \$1400 departmental allocation for Dance Department for buying the refrigerator.
- Jon: I just want to clarify is that providing them a flat \$1,400 or up to \$1,400 whatever their final quote is?
- Pratima: Provide them 1400, so they would have that plus minus savings. Trying to make less work for students
- Joseph: I motion to approve the allocation request for the lower of the actual cost of \$1400 for the Dance Department
- Maleen: I second.
- Pratima: What would happen if their cost goes above \$1400?
- Jon: In that case, we'll provide them \$1400, and the Dance Department will cover the rest. This is just to guarantee that we are not giving them more money than what they will actually spend.
- Jon: 7-0-0

7. FY25 Budget Discussion

- Jon: So in the email I sent yesterday, there are 3 versions of the budget: one that the officers propose, second is the one I showed you guys last week, third one is F&B version. Let me open that now. There will be individual sheets for you guys to play around with the numbers and see what make sense to you. At the next meeting, we should review everyone's versions or I can try summarize all the ideas collectively. We have 2 more meetings this quarter, so my hope is that within the next 2 meetings, we will reach agreement on the budget recommendations.
- Jon: One thing I'll reiterate is that in the past, we make personnel assumption based on the average, and that's not always the case. For example, my tuition is higher than the average, so that resulted in personnel cost higher than the estimate. There's a risk that it could happen again next year because we don't know who the officers will be next year, so I think we should at least have some buffer room for that
- AJ: I think the senate discussed this, looking at the officer positions and what are some of the pathways on who get selected for what position. We do know that there is a historical trend, even though we represent all 16000 graduate students on Seattle campus, certain schools have more representation. We really have to evaluate whether our core mission is aligning with the program. The other thing is about staff – there's a gap between the compensation of officers and staff, healthcare benefits & tuition – our staff do not get that. Their current pay at \$23/h is above what a normal job on campus with 19hr/week. Do we want to fix that gap as we intentionally raised the compensation of our staff? Another thing is about the total hours per week – what get done in a week, and prioritizing how that aligns with our mission. It seems like our pay increase of \$1/staff was good but not necessary, so that \$7000 got rejected
- Jon: Another idea I have is that how many of you would be available for an extended meeting next week?
- Joseph: I am free to 12:30
- Pratima: How long will it last?
- Jon: We do have a hard stop at 12:30. The plan is to go through the allocation reviews first and then dive deep into the budget discussion
- Amanda: I am okay with going till 12:30
- Tiya: Next week, I won't be able to attend
- Jon: I just asked that you provide your recommendations in advance so I can share with the committee
- AJ: My question for the committee is what would be helpful for you all to make a decision? What are you prioritizing to cut, or what missions we need to follow, etc?
- Franco: I'd like to see the trend and where all of the funds from the reserve go, because my biggest concern while reviewing the budget is that we started 2022 with \$440,000 and end balance in 2024 would be \$80,000; we've been eating away a lot of the general reserve funds to make up for the expenses that we've been proposing. Is there a way we can, even if we can't reduce the use of the reserve fund itself, find way to replenish that and maintain some minimum balance for that.
- Jon: The history is in the sheet.
- AJ: Not only that, but the actual line-by-line. I want to see the actual expenditure report.
- Pratima: I'll look into this clearly, but I think all of us as GPSS senators, we should mainly focus on the sustainability of GPSS and what it needs – if we need to reduce the officers, which I think more costly than the staff, then we can reduce the officers. No matter what it is, I think we should look for the sustainability of the GPSS. We can't just use all the money and no longer exist
- Jon: Personally, I have a hard time understanding why the expenditure is needed?
- Pratima: I think yearly would be enough, to see the timeline.

- Franco: What resources have been replenishing the reserve fund itself, how were we able to accumulate that \$400,000 at the beginning?
- Amanda: Our savings have been rolled over year by year. I also agree with Pratima that we have to cut where we need to, and if that's a role costing more money, that would preserve us more. But I can tell that officers currently at those roles do a lot of work, but staff is cheaper – so it could be an alternative. We do have to preserve ourselves at this point.
- Jon: The other thing I'd do is, I know you guys wonder what each officer does, officers publish a quarterly report. We can use that as a basis to understand their work. So far we have the reports from summer and autumn, and I can share those with you.
- Amanda: It sounds like the biggest expense is officer payroll.
- Jon: Yes
- Amanda: If that's the case, for cost-analysis, isn't that the most productive part to cut?
- Pratima: That would be, and I think we should go for that. I was there when we added the VP of Admin, and half of us had the concern about the reserve fund running out. It was based on our prediction, but now in 2024, it was the case. This futuristic analysis was not properly done when we added the officer. I think to increase our fund, we should merge 2 officers, whichever we decide, and to reduce the workload, we might add the staff member
- Jon: Let's look at the wider picture – right now we are too focused on cutting cost. Maybe the first thing we have to decide as a committee is, the proposed budget get funded by SAF is \$584,000 – do we feel that needs to be reviewed?
- Joseph: My opinion is that we should be spending as close as our revenue, ideally
- Amanda: For clarity here, Joseph you said you are comfortable spending up to what we are given?
- Joseph: Yes, the funding we receive from SAF. Big picture our goal should be not spending above what we get each year
- Amanda: Based on financial analysis, we should be spending less and have reserve. If anything, we should get try to get as much as possible as the reserve is running out.
- Jon: The maximum we can request for SAF this year is around \$523,000. I can guarantee with you that SAF will not give us more than what we set the budget for. If you want to request the maximum amount, we should try to set our budget around \$523,000
- Pratima: I second with Amanda. We should set the budget and try not spend all the money we have, so we have some left for the reserve
- Jon: One thing I'd love we can agree on today is what is the number we should aim to get from SAF? With that number, you guys can go and play around.
- Joseph: I still think it makes sense to ask for the maximum as possible, because we cannot get beyond that, so it does not hurt to ask for the maximum
- Pratima: I'd also suggest us as a committee to remain neutral when the officers come and share their opinions. We have to take a neutral stand and make a decision as a team
- Joseph: I think the way I phrased my question made Matthew a bit defensive, which I did not mean. I was looking to hear more about what the position does on the daily basis.
- Amanda: You did well, Joseph – but I also agree with Pratima
- Pratima: Yes, the officers right now should separate themselves from the position.
- Jon: I want to put a pause on this because a lot of this discussion is getting into specific areas that should be saved for next week. I want us to focus back on is what is total amount that we should be aiming for when we come up with our own proposal? The number right here, \$584000, we agreed that needs to come down – let's try to agree on how much should it be reduced?
- Amanda: I think we should even it out – so \$525,000 would be an appropriate number.
- Joseph: That's good, a little bit above what we can ask for.

- Jon: When you guys play around with these numbers, let me know if you have any questions. I want us to come to next meeting with our own version of numbers. It seems like we agree on \$525,000
- Joseph: Yes
- Jon: I'll share that with the rest of the committee as well

8. Adjournment

- Joseph: I motion to adjourn the meeting
- Amanda: I second
- Jon: Hearing no objections, this meeting is adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45AM. VP of Finance thanked everyone for joining.