

GPSS Finance and Budget Committee

2023 – 2024 Meeting Minutes

Friday, Feb 23, 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
- Franco R. Carlos: GPSS Senator
- Amanda Yapp: GPSS Senator
- Ardhra Sivasankaran: GPSS Senator
- Hannah Shipman: GPSS Senator
- A.J. Balatico: GPSS President
- Carrie Moore: GPSS Advisor
- Monica Tschang: Presenter from Neuroscience Community Outreach Group
- Tyler Vuu: Presenter from the Gaming Association @UW
- Daniel Cook: Presenter from History Department
- Simon Hans Edasi: Presenter from Earth & Space Sciences

Not Present:

- Pratima K C: GPSS Executive Senator
- Tiya Farah: GPSS Senator

VP of Finance called the Meeting to order at 10:40am

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.

3. Special Allocation Request – Neuroscience Community Outreach Group

- Monica: I am on the leadership for NCOG, and we are a collective of graduate students from multiple departments, who are interested in communicating neuroscience outreach. We are in the revival period following the pandemic, so we are working on providing some momentum for this group. Our mission is to enhance public understanding of

neuroscience, and primary target audience are K12 classrooms but public in general. One of those events we are trying to do at UW is the Brain Awareness Open House, a part of the international movement for Brain Awareness Week. Our goal is to bring high-school students from historically underrepresented schools to UW to learn from faculty and PhD students. Activities include activity zone, reverse science fair, informational booths from different communities/organizations in Seattle. Some of the goals for event is to encourage exploration and empower high-school students in terms of neuroscience but also to provide our graduate students with an opportunity to have live demonstrations and present to audience that they did not present before.

- Jon: You are right on time
- Maleen: How do graduate students fit in to this program and overall planning?
- Monica: The planning team is about 5-10 people, all volunteers and we have been working on other events too. We are also recruiting volunteers for the program at the moment, aiming at 20 graduate students for the events and they will have different shifts.
- Maleen: How do they benefit from this event?
- Monica: Like I said, they can develop presentation skills – communicating science to the public, esp young scientists, is something we don't have embedded in our curriculum, for the most parts. And also learn teaching pedagogy from giving live demonstrations and interactive activities.
- AJ: Brain Awareness Week is typically mid-March. Is this event just a continuation or you are planning a traditional thing during the week?
- Monica: It is usually in mid-March. A lot of organizations run events that week, so it's easier for us to book a day in April.
- Jon: We understand that graduate students can volunteer for the event. But can we ask how many people in the core planning group are grad students?
- Monica: All of them
- Jon: How are you guys seeking the volunteer for this event?
- Monica: Students in our program are from different departments, so we can do outreach to different department heads, and also our network as well.
- Jon: What are the qualifications to volunteer for this event?
- Monica: You have to be a graduate student – we do have a couple of undergrad students volunteer for different groups that are presenting. We do want to encourage some learning development, so we have an orientation for volunteers that they have to attend
- Hannah: Is this event something you've done previously?
- Monica: I was not around, but before the pandemic, it was held annually.
- Hannah: Do they have an estimate of the attendance from last years?
- Monica: Yes, they were much larger than what we are attempting right now. They invited around 800 students from middle schools and high-schools, and they used both Ballrooms in the HUB.

4. Special Allocation Request – Gaming Association at UW

- Tyler: Husky Expo 2024 is a celebration of gaming and pop culture hosted at the University of Washington by our RSO. Started in 2015, Husky Expo draws over 1000 attendees annually and is one of the largest student-run gaming events in the US. Our attendance grew steadily over the past couple years. For this year, we aim to hit 1400 attendees with better advertising. The event will be April 27, and the venue will be in the HUB Ballrooms. For this year's features, we feature Artist Alley and work with a lot gaming affiliated RSOs, such as Game Dev, Lan Tournaments, etc. We also have freeplay areas for students to come, as well as industry panels with guests from the industry. These are social media metrics, previous brand partners and guests (mostly

influencers, TikTok creators, gaming pros). By GPSS supporting this event, you are able to get a booth space and be on the sponsor list.

- Hannah: How many of those attendees are expected to be grad students?
- Tyler: I believe it is around 200, mainly geared towards undergraduates. We do attract large graduate audience, mainly because some graduates are parts of the gaming space, and it's a place for them to reach out to other. We also have a research gaming group, comprised of graduates, they'll be presenting in the panel at our event.
- Hannah: Thank you
- Jon: How much of the \$8000 event cost is covered by sponsorship?
- Tyler: I believe we are trying to start sponsorship with PepsiCo, estimated around \$5000. We are also trying to get money from ASUW
- Jon: Will this purely be for fun/entertainment event? Or will there be any career/professional opportunities in the gaming industry?
- Tyler: It is geared towards entertainment. But there are opportunities for networking, as I said, we are inviting former gaming professionals and people from industry.
- AJ: Has there been intentional outreach to organizations like the Foster Level Up or other series of gaming groups?
- Tyler: I believe our leadership has, but they have not responded yet but hopefully soon.
- Jon: It's a very straightforward presentation. We'll let you know the result.

5. Departmental Allocation Request – History Department

- Daniel: I am here to request \$800 for the History Department to fund a writing retreat at the end of the quarter. It will take place in either May or June. The department has a small group called Graduate Liaison Committee that would essentially manage the allocated fund. This committee consists of 4 graduate students to host events that we will come together as a community and facilitate development too. The mission of the GLC this year for the writing retreat to bring all graduate students in the department together. At this retreat, students will have the opportunity to share their research, workshop writing and review each other writing for publishing/dissertation. It is also aimed to give senior graduate students an opportunity to further develop their teaching pedagogy. I went ahead and broke down the cost – we estimated total at \$800. The round trip ferry ticket to Bainbridge cost \$9 round trip, and we estimated 20 people to join us. We will also provide coffee and meal. We believe that this retreat is essential because history, as a discipline, can often be solitary. We often find ourselves hunting down, reading and writing on our own, it's a privilege to do this kind of work, but it's not often for us to do this with others. Writing retreat is meant to bring historians in different fields together.
- Joseph: Are you charging the attendees any fees?
- Daniel: No, the idea is if we get this departmental allocation approved, we'll not have to charge any graduate students any money.
- AJ: Do you have any contingency plans if there are more people sign up?
- Daniel: GLC has a little bit money we receive from the department each year. We have been very frugal with that money for the entire year, so we can use that to cover if any more people want to go
- Hannah: If you get the full amount, and only 15 people show up. What would you plan to do?
- Daniel: There are a few options: one is to use the extra money to hold a pomodoro study session that the GLC has been interested in doing at the end of spring quarter and provide beverages in that session. There is always something that GLC can do with the money we have extra, but the bigger problem is whether or not we have enough money to do the thing we hoped.

- Hannah: What is a pomodoro session?
- Daniel: It's a time study session, 25 minutes of studying, 5 minutes of rest, and so. And 2 hours after, we take a longer break. We hosted 1 earlier in the year but did not have the money to provide beverages/food. It was a productive session as we put a timer on and put everyone to study
- Jon: Have you considered charging a small amount?
- Daniel: It's our last resort, if nothing plans out, but we really don't want cost to be the determining factor whether or not students can attend
- Hannah: How long did you say this retreat would be?
- Daniel: Yes, that's the plan
- Maleen: Are you driving there?
- Daniel: We would try to set up carpool, we actually spoke to people who have access to transportation
- Maleen: Are they tax-exempt tickets? Normally departments have exemption if you ask them
- Daniel: That's something we can look into

6. Departmental Allocation Request – Earth & Space Sciences

- Simon Hans: Every year we have a retreat to Friday Harbor Labs where we spend time bonding as a student body and planning for the year to come.
- Presenter: The plan is next Friday (March 1st), students will head to the ferry in the afternoon carpooling and take the ferry to FHL. What we've done in the past is to coordinate purchase food and cook by ourselves to reduce the cost. On the 2nd day, really the big day, we pay for breakfast provided by FHL. Students will go into different groups to the island for different outdoor activities. We will go back and gather for dinner provided by FHL, then discuss expectations for next year. Last day, we have more free time in the morning and depart in the afternoon. Our retreat is open to any graduate and professional students in the ESS department. This meeting will benefit for the comradery of the department and continued excellence of our graduate community. We request \$750 to offset the cost of lodging to reduce the burden for students.
- AJ: When was the last time this retreat happened? Before covid?
- Simon Hans: That was the last time we had fundings from GPSS. We had this retreat last year but there was a mix-up with the invoice from FHL, so we could not request from GPSS.
- Maleen: How much are you guys collecting from students?
- Simon Hans: Whatever we can't convince the department to pay as well as not funded by GPSS. We had 3-year break in the past, so we had a bunch of money left but since we didn't get fundings from GPSS, we spent most of it. If that was the case, a student is estimated to pay from \$30 to \$60
- Maleen: Did you guys get any departmental allocation this year?
- Simon Hans: Yes, we got approved for a picnic table and we purchased it. We have had funding, but just not for this particular request.
- Hannah: For this allocation, how much is the total cost?
- Simon Hans: Around \$2500, including food, lodging, technology fee/
- Maleen: How many students did sign up?
- Presenter: This year, we have 42 students
- Maleen: We must see the cap we fund for each student right.
- Jon: Thank you so much for coming.

7. Voting Discussion

I. Neuroscience Community Outreach Group

- Maleen: Sounds like a nice event
- Joseph: I agree
- Jon: We can help spread the information for the graduate volunteers as well
- Maleen: I motion to approve the special allocation request of \$750 for NCOG
- Joseph: I second
- Jon: 7-0-0. This allocation is approved

II. Gaming Association at UW

- AJ: I wanted to add another context – they were rejected by the GPSS Diversity Committee as it's not a diversity event
- Jon: What do you guys think about the expected graduate student attendance and in the planning?
- Hannah: I do not think there are any graduate students involved in the planning
- Ardhra: 200/1350 for attendance is not that much representation for graduate students
- Amanda: I think percentagewise, graduate students occupy about 12% of attendance; and they ask for \$750, which is about 10% of the total event cost, so relatively I think it makes sense. That's how I'd reason it out, but it's geared towards undergraduate students. Could we save that money and allocate it somewhere else?
- Maleen: I agree.
- Jon: Based on their sponsorship packages, if we only give them \$500, we are still qualified to have a booth space to promote, as well as logos/names, announcement on the socials
- Amanda: That can be a good proposal, especially if we are looking to advertise towards more graduate students.
- AJ: For any events that are open to general public, we expect 1/3 of attendees would be graduate students (same as the proportion of graduate community at UW).
- Amanda: Thanks for the context
- Ardhra: Even if we get the booth space, that's only for graduate students who show up at the event, so that would not do us any benefits.
- Amanda: I think we can pass this as it seems like they're just trying to get money instead of benefiting the graduate community.
- Joseph: I motion to approve the special allocation request from the Gaming Association for \$750.
- Maleen: I second.
- Jon: 1-5-1. This motion is rejected, we'll let them know

III. Departmental Allocation from History Department

- Joseph: This request seems exactly like what we should fund
- Hannah: I agree, but I'd say we should fund for \$750 as they said, there might be fewer students to show up
- Amanda: I just want to emphasize the idea that we should fund this completely. He's prepared, he had numbers, and he did his research before coming.
- Ardhra: If the extra money is the concern, can we ask them for refund?
- Jon: Since they itemize all the expenses per person, an easy way to do this is to say we'll fund \$40/person, up to a certain number
- Joseph: I move to approve the departmental allocation request to fund \$40/student, up to \$800 for the history department
- Maleen: I second
- Jon: 7-0-0. This motion is approved
- Carrie: Point of information – what meal of the day is \$25?
- Jon: I think it's for lunch.

- Carrie: So there is a per diem limit for lunch at \$20. The coffee part could be included in breakfast. The total is fine.
- Amanda: Why don't we reallocate?
- Jon: Yes, we can readjust that and let them know. So breakfast cap is \$18, and \$20 for lunch.

IV. Departmental Allocation from EES

- Maleen: The problem that I am considering is that they already requested the same type of funding this cycle
- AJ: Just for context, this is also a reoccurring departmental thing, not like they have not ever received money. The tradeoff would be this will take place of another allocation.
- Hannah: I am still in favor of it for the same reason as the previous one
- Adrhra: Is there a cap on how much a department can get a year?
- Jon: There's a cap on capital item purchases, limit of \$1000 per year. Besides that, not really
- Maleen: Can we ask them to set this as a special allocation instead? Because we can only approve 5 departmental allocations this year
- Adrhra: How many departments have we funded before?
- Jon: We have 1 more to approve as we've approved 4 so far.
- Adrhra: We have the remaining spring quarter, so maybe we should not do this
- AJ: The contingency plan is that if we go over, we can go over with the senate. But their retreat is next week, so they do not have time to go back as an RSO.
- Jon: I know that for last year, we moved some of the special allocations to travel grants, so this year, we can do that too if we have more demands for departmental allocations. Historically, we don't have a lot of requests for departmental allocations in the spring.
- Jon: For reference, after we gave \$1400 to the dance department, the maximum we can give here is \$800
- Adrhra: They are charging their students, right? So I think we should give them the whole amount for student affair. Is this controversial if I vote for \$800 even though they only ask for \$750?
- Maleen: But you are ignoring the fact that we already gave them \$1000, which will cause an uneven distribution of fund
- AJ: Another way to think about it is that if we increase the fund from \$750 to \$800, it will reduce the cost per student by \$1. Is it worth doing?
- Amanda: For clarity, can we do a quick pros and cons for this allocation?
- Jon: Pros is that this is the thing that we typically want to fund, all the money will go to benefit graduate students. Cons is that we already funded them once, so if other departments want funding later, we will have the limited money to give out. You can think of it 2 ways: departments that come to ask us for money, they are the ones that know about this source of funding, or they truly need the money
- Adrhra: But we can bring this to the senate to approve as a special allocation, and historically, the senate would approve this historically, right?
- AJ: Yes. Anything that is special allocation could be applied to departmental, but we don't do the other way around as we don't want RSO to request a table, but we can always move the money
- Adrhra: I can make a motion to approve then. I move to approve the departmental allocation of \$750 to the EES department for their retreat
- Joseph: I second
- Jon: 3-0-3. This motion passes.

8. FY25 Budget Discussion

- Amanda: Is there a way to average out some of the costs, such as tuition & salaries, for the officers to do the median, because I think median is more representative instead of average
- AJ: Average is the long-run average, median would lock in to 1 program. For us, the fiscal conservativeness, just to make projections that are more robust, we have to go higher anyways, we have to lock in \$28,000 instead of \$24,000
- Amanda: Thanks for the clarity on that concern. I also made a note on the diversity fund, I think we touched on that a little bit, but there seemed to be a 43% increase. Can we revisit that justification?
- Jon: The main reason for that, stated by the VP of Equity & Inclusion, is that there's an overall push for diversity programming from the school. We want to increase the diversity fund to reflect that change in GPSS. Some of it was also moved around underutilized funds from other officers' budget into that budget
- Amanda: Do we know the percentage of increase from the school for the diversity?
- Jon: I don't think they have stated a specific number, it's an overall direction in terms of culture and focus
- Amanda: Another revision I wanted to make is on the SAF request. I put it up to 6.5%, you said they cap at 8%, so 6.5% increase would equal \$32,000. We should go and ask for SAF up to 6.5% request, if we fall less, it's fine.
- Carrie: We'd recommend that you always ask for 8%. You'll probably get allocated less than 4%, but the general plan is to request the maximum
- Amanda: Can you ask for 8% or \$32,000?
- Carrie: It's either or (up to 8% or \$32,000) depending on what your allocation is.
- AJ: For additional context about SAF history, we have a soft policy during Covid to just fund anything below \$100,000. However, we are not in that situation anymore. The balance is probably towards units with minimum wage – our \$24/hr. for staff members is competitive for the next 2 years, but if they consistently increase the minimum wage, it'd be something we should consider.
- Amanda: During the summer, it looks like there's a pay decrease for the officers. Would that look more favorable to SAF to grant us more money?
- AJ: My one concern would be that by decreasing overall budget, they might think GPSS must be fixing it on their own, so SAF doesn't have to give them that much. The increase university-wide for the SAF is about \$4M, they only have \$800,000 to allocate, so they only fund 20% of what it requested
- Jon: Maleen and I are SAF voting members. I have to recuse myself from this request, but my general thought process is that I am not more likely to fund request if it's mainly wage increase. It must be a meaningful contribution towards fulfilling the mission of the unit. Honestly, if I saw this, I'd say GPSS historically has been underfunded, but they are making steps to lower that and remain competitive, I'd consider it as a positive thing.
- Maleen: For me, even if I fund something like this, I want to see cuts from the organizations.
- AJ: When I presented, our increase was only \$17,000 because we were planning deficit spending, but we had to spend our reserves. That was actually a proposal by a F&B member, and he was like they made all this cut and they had all the plans, so they didn't need any money. So the alternative is that if money is not spent by one unit, it'd go to the other one. Not favoring any particular units, but the limited resource is for where we should put the money.
- Jon: We'd make the point that we are taking steps to be lenient, but we still need help from SAF, because without that, we would not be able to survive beyond next year.
- Maleen: How do we expect to request the higher amount by putting cuts in?

- Jon: Even if we put the cuts in, our operating budget was \$608,000, which was proposed by the officers. The maximum we could request from SAF is \$523,000. Even the one that Joseph proposed, \$531,000, is still over the amount that SAF will give us. We can request that amount and say we still need all of that even when we already cut a lot. I cannot predict the future, but I am fairly confident that they are not going to say GPSS does not need any money.
- Maleen: I motion to adjourn the meeting
- Joseph: I second
- Amanda: I object. I have another question – what time do we plan for our next meeting to last?
- Jon: Next week, we must finalize and make the recommendations. So it depends when we can do that.
- Amanda: I just feel like the tension is high in this meeting, so I want everyone to be calm and be heard because this topic is very important. I can allocate 1hr for next week, but I already allocated 2 hours for this week.
- Jon: This is a committee, for us to be able to vote, we need all committee members to be here, but over time we see a lot of members leave.
- Amanda: I did put a lot of time and efforts into reviewing it. I want to make sure everyone is on the same page, so I understand why you would be frustrated as a chair. I don't know if we can incentivize people to do more things, but I want to make sure we are respecting time of people who are here.
- Jon: We have 30 minutes to approve this. If not, we have to push it to next week.
- AJ: You all have to vote no to the adjournment to continue the meeting
- Jon: The motion is defeated.
- Joseph: Here's my proposal. It seems like most committee members vote to remove officer position as necessary. I tried to see what it will look like to keep all 6 officers. We have to take out a lot of money to meet the \$530,000. I cut down to only 3 staff members, and a little bit of everything else. For example, I have to cut from VP of External Affairs, Diversity Fund, etc.
- Jon: I reformatted the sheet to reflect the change from the officers' proposal and your modification, Joseph.
- Joseph: Last meeting, we agreed to bring it down to \$530,000 for our proposal, and each of committee member worked on how that happened. For mine, not reducing the number of officers means cutting down on staff members to 3.
- Matthew: Staff is the easiest thing to cut, personnel wise. I would like F&B to come to the executive committee meeting this week for the discussion to be on the same page. Secondly, I am aware of some information that had been presented to you all, and it's good that executive committee should access to that too. The next executive meeting will be on Wednesday at 5:30. 6 staff members are a lot, and with any of these positions, we have to think about the division of labor. The reason why we do so well this year is because when we pay staff to do the work, we reduce the pressure and workload for the senators. So, if we cut staff, going forward, be aware that there'll be higher expectation for senators to do certain types of things. But that sounds like an approach we can do, and I appreciate your efforts and time.
- Joseph: I believe other members also have their proposals
- Amanda: I did go over mine earlier. I increased the SAF request to 6.5%, we want to keep it more conservative. I was also questioning why we used the average instead of median, but I understand that's what historically has been used. I also considered proposing a median overall tuition cost, streamlining the cost but still incentivize senators

to take on certain positions. I feel like that'd be fairer, and I think depending on that median tuition cost, the leftover, if lower, could be readmitted back to GPSS fund.

- AJ: The \$24,700 is the average, the median will not reflect anyone's actual tuition. A lot of the years, we'd be under a lot.
- Amanda: So, what is the median tuition for each of the 6 officers? And each year, keep track of that and project forward, so if anyone falls below that median, the remainder amount can be put in a fund to generate more money
- Maleen: That's exactly what the reserve is. The problem we have right now is the fact that we can put whatever money in the reserve, but the tuition cost will change every year, based on which departments and who get selected. Right now, we have 1 person from Foster, which makes the tuition more expensive.
- Amanda: I understand it's hard, but I was just thinking of other ways instead of cutting
- Matthew: Yes, what you're getting at is important. One idea is that we could do a hard cap on what tuition amount as well. My only issue is that logistically, the way we're doing it is TA/RA, which makes it easy on the back end. If we change that, it'll make things more complicated.
- Carrie: One way you can look at that is everyone gets \$24,000, meaning everyone gets 80% of their tuition paid. That way, you are not disadvantaging anyone who has higher/lower program cost, and it has big impacts on the budget but minimal impacts on the tuition
- Maleen: That's gonna take a lot of students out of the pool, because they would be completely discouraged. PhD students are 100% funded by their own departments, so if we are doing that, we're not attracting any PhD students as officers.
- AJ: As an officer for 3 years, I'd have just been a RA because of the tuition waiver, but it's an easier sell than you still must do a lot of work but pay less. The financial package as it is is good. Even just culturally, we have to attract people from more diverse programs, I have the history of officers demographic. It should not be based on the program, it's more the person who is qualified to do the job. There would be some years if we realized that 6 officers from Grad tier 1,2,3, we would be underspending, that's why we use the 10-year average, not just year-over-year analysis. That also takes into account of the 3% increase in tuition
- Maleen: What about the wages?
- AJ: Wages will change based on the union contract
- Maleen: Are wages different for each officer?
- AJ: Typically ranging from \$29 to \$32, so every \$1 difference would amount up to \$660/year.
- Matthew: Over the summer, we also tax on social security and Medicare.
- AJ: You don't get double tuition, but if you do research position and are an officer, you will get paid 40 hours per week, and \$30 per hour.
- Jon: I think we are getting a bit sidetracked. What we need to discuss as a whole committee, the thing about personnel cost is that we do not know who will run to be officers, but that tuition difference in the long run is not that big of a difference. Some years we go over, some years we go under. The more important thing for us to work on is how much we are going to approve for next year's budget, because that number will determine how much going to be in the reserve the next year. What I am worried about is that if we follow the original budget of \$608,000 overall, that'll leave us \$38,000 in the reserve minus \$25,000, so we have \$13,000 in the reserve plus we get another \$530,000, that means the budget next year would be no higher than \$550,000, or we'll run out of the reserve. Some people suggest breaking down the endowment, I guess we can choose to break it, but that's the choice we have to make.

9. Adjournment

- Joseph: I motion to adjourn the meeting because I have to run to class
- Maleen: I second
- Jon: Hearing none. This meeting was adjourned at 12:30PM

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM. VP of Finance thanked everyone for joining.