



*The*  
**UNIVERSITY**  
*of* **VERMONT**



**Tuesday, February 6, 2024, Time: 7:00 pm**

**Recording Link: [Graduate Student Senate Meeting Recording](#)**

## **In attendance**

**Senators:** Anthony Barrows, Bren Cable, Carlos Amissah, Diego Javier-Jimenez, Emma Myric, Gift Omoruyi, Goodness Rex Nze-Igwe, Jenan Husain, Joy Emmanuel, Matthew Breunig, Muhammad Adeel Arif, Niara Hicks, Pawan Bastola, Stephen Marshall, Taylor Ann Jeannette Kocian, Toyib Aremu, Temitope Borikwaye.

**Guest:** Nathan Colgrove

**Executive Council Attendees:** Cara Simone, Ijaz Ul Haq, Masoumeh Khodaverdi, Omid Sedighi, Yasaman Pedari

22 total number attended.

## **Agenda:**

GSS Senate Agenda for the First Spring Meeting: February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024

- I. Roll Call
- II. Call to Order

The meeting at 7:01 pm was called to order by Vice-President, Cara Simone

- III. **Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes (November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023)**

Taylor Ann Jeannette Kocian moved the motion to approve the previous minutes, it was seconded by Omid Sedighi.

- IV. Officers Reports
  - a. **President**

The President of GSS and Chair of the Student Affairs Committee expressed his gratitude to those who attended a recent retreat on Jan 27, 2024, and emphasized the importance of Senate meetings. He discussed the necessity of attending such meetings to advocate for student needs and improve student life. Ijaz mentioned brainstorming sessions during the retreat

aimed at collecting data for a survey to identify areas of focus. He highlighted the need to increase the budget to accommodate club needs, proposing a fee increase. Additionally, he mentioned plans to revise the GSS constitution and discuss the acquisition of new GSS office space at the Discovery Hall.

**b. Vice President**

Cara Simone discussed the need for greater engagement of graduate students in the Senate and overall. She emphasized collaboration with the graduate college administration while maintaining autonomy as a separate student-run entity funded by students. Cara highlighted upcoming challenges and plans for the semester, including revising resolutions. She encouraged committee members to propose ideas and offered a survey for feedback. Cara expressed a commitment to setting up the next E-board for success and discussed efforts to document their work for future reference.

**c. Treasurer**

Yasaman Pedari, the GSS Treasure reported on the proposed budget for the spring semester, outlining purchases already made and planned social events such as bar events and boardgame. She mentions potential events and explains the revenue and expenditure status, highlighting a revenue of \$15,000 and \$2,600 spent so far.

Jenan Husain moved to approve the office report, it was seconded by Emma Myrick.

VI. Committee Reports

a. Standing Committee reports  
**Events Committee**

Bren Cable from the Events Committee mentioned about upcoming events. She echoed Yasaman's mention of a tentative Boardroom Cafe event on February 16th or 17th. Additionally, Bren highlighted a scheduled soccer game at the indoor UVM soccer facility in February. She mentioned that advertisements will be circulated closer to the event dates.

**Professional Development Committee**

Toyib Aremu, representing the Professional Development Committee, informs the group about a recent event organized by their committee. He shared that the event featured a representative from the Career Center who discussed the services offered. Toyib mentioned that the event was successful with approximately 10 to 15 graduate students in attendance.

**Health and Wellness Committee**

Gift Omoruyi provided a brief update, mentioning that they don't have a formal update at the moment. However, they have reached out to the recreation team to plan something, and they will provide an update on this matter in the next meeting.

- b. Ad hoc Committee reports
- c. **Student Affairs Committee**

Ijaz Ul Haq mentioned plans for the Student Affairs Committee. He states that he will reach out to two other committee members to collaborate on drafting resolutions and making changes to the constitution along with the Eboard. He mentioned that this update will be discussed further in the next meeting.

III. Old Business:

a. **CHI Alpha Graduate Christian Fellowship Club Recognition Renewal**

Nathan Colgrove, president of the club, highlighted the club's mission dedicated to facilitating interfaith dialogue, especially among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. He emphasized the club's support for international students, including providing transportation from the airport and organizing events with the Office of International Education (OIE). Additionally, the club offers learning opportunities in a Christian context, such as an ancient Greek class for studying biblical texts. Nathan mentioned their weekly meetings featuring corporate worship and providing meals for students in need, underscoring their commitment to addressing food insecurity among graduate students.

Anthony Barrows moved to approve the renewal of the club, it was seconded by Gift Omoruyi.

III. New Business:

a. Engaging GSS

- i. **Attendance/Reimagining Elections**
- ii. **Goals to represent and support Grad life**

Cara mentioned that the Executive Board (e-board) is focused on engaging graduate students and increasing their participation in Senate and other activities. She discussed a resolution related to this engagement. Additionally, Cara highlighted the upcoming elections for the new e-board and emphasized the importance of setting up the next e-board for success by providing comprehensive documentation of their activities and initiatives.

b. **Grad Student Survey –Preview, feedback, Deployment Plan**

The new business presented by Vice President Cara is a survey aimed at learning about graduate students' needs, interests, and thoughts regarding student government advocacy and support. The survey covers various topics such as housing, post-graduation resources and support, mental health, communication and events, and general questions about what graduate students need to be successful. Cara briefly presented the survey questions and sought agreement from the members to send out the survey and continue editing it to send it out in two weeks.

i. **Discussion**

Jenan Husain, who recently rejoined the GSS after involvement in the GSS Housing committee, emphasized the importance of increasing the accessibility of the survey. She shared her previous experience collaborating with an on-campus entity to send out surveys, citing the example of the housing survey. In that instance, they collaborated with an entity on campus that had access to a broader audience, enabling wider dissemination of the survey and more extensive outreach efforts. Jenan also raised questions about whether the survey would be sent out independently or through GRADNET, noting that using GRADNET might not reach all graduate students, as it's limited to those on the GRADNET listserv. She suggested exploring other avenues to reach a wider audience.

Anthony Barrows expressed agreement that reaching a broad audience is important. He emphasized the purpose of the survey to tailor the GSS's presence on campus to better meet the needs and preferences of graduate students. He suggested that ensuring the survey reaches all graduate students should be a priority and proposed involving the Dean's office if necessary to meet this goal. While acknowledging that there may not be a bylaw specifically requiring approval for such a survey, he advocated for the survey to be reviewed and approved by the GSS before dissemination to ensure organization and content alignment with the organization's objectives.

Cara proposed sending out the survey in approximately two weeks, around February 20th, and committed to reporting back on the survey's status at the meeting on February 27th. Anthony Barrows made a motion to approve this plan, which was seconded by Diego Javier-Jimenez.

### **c. Resolution 2024-2-06**

Cara discussed the proposal of a Senate resolution to increase GSS fees for graduate students from \$7-\$10 per semester to \$15-\$25. The current funding allocation of \$7.00 for four or fewer credits and \$10.00 for five or more credit hours per graduate student each semester has been deemed insufficient to sustain and expand the quality and range of services, activities, and resources necessary for the holistic development of the graduate student community. This increase aims to enhance the organization's viability. Cara emphasized the importance of supporting GSS, which oversees over 20 clubs and 6 committees crucial for graduate student experiences. She highlighted her discussions with the SGA's business manager regarding fees and budget, noting the removal of the comprehensive fee for graduate students. Cara stressed the need for additional resources to sustain GSS effectively and expressed a desire for at least a half-time staff member to assist with events, website management, and financial tasks. Yasaman Pedari supported this idea, emphasizing the workload associated with managing events and finances. Both highlighted the necessity of additional support.

Taylor Ann Jeannette Kocian moved to extend the meeting by 10 minutes, supported by Goodness Nze-Igwe and seconded by Diego Javier-Jimenez.

### **i. Discussion**

Anthony and Cara discussed the need for more flexibility in funding allocation within GSS. Anthony questioned whether there were plans to extend stipends to committee chairs or other senators for various reasons. Cara expressed the desire for additional staffing to ensure

continuity and efficiency within GSS operations. She highlighted the importance of having personnel dedicated to tasks such as website management and financial responsibilities. Cara drew parallels with SGA's structure, where executives receive generous stipends, and committee chairs are compensated. She suggested exploring similar models to enhance GSS's effectiveness and engagement.

Taylor Kocian expressed the need for more detailed information regarding the proposed increase in GSS fees and the hiring of a part-time administrator. She emphasized the importance of understanding the financial implications and ensuring transparency before voting on the matter. Taylor also noted that while \$25 might seem insignificant on its own, it represents a significant percentage increase from the current student fees, which could potentially cause concern among students. She highlighted the importance of addressing these concerns and providing thorough information to gain support for the proposal.

Toyib Aremu expressed concern about the comparison between the budgets of undergraduate and graduate student organizations. He highlighted that while there are over 11,000 undergraduate students at UVM, there are fewer graduate students. Toyib argued that the difference in operating budgets between the two organizations might be justified due to this significant disparity in the student population. He suggested that the reasons for increasing graduate student fees should be clearer and more substantial than just comparing them to undergraduate budgets. Toyib emphasized that graduate students have different priorities and needs compared to undergraduates. He also pointed out that even a seemingly small increase of \$25 could evoke negative reactions from students if the reasoning behind it is not sufficiently convincing.

## **ii. Next steps**

Cara will send out the revised resolution to the senators, so they have it two weeks before the next meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Adjournment 8:15 pm

**Next Meeting: February 27, 2024, 7:00 -8:00 PM**  
**Mode: Online, Microsoft Teams**