Hours: Robin Anderson, Ghazah Abbasi, Adina Gianelli


Staff: Craig Bidiman, Srinivas Lankala.

Others: David Vaillancourt (Associate Dean of Students), John McCarthy (Dean of the Graduate School, Danielle Allessio (Education, VP Candidate), Avery Fürst (Labor Studies, VP Candidate), Samantha Sterba (Economics, VP Candidate), Yetunde Ajao (AGASA), Luisa Galindo (EcoGSO).

Robin Anderson called the meeting to order at 1.03 PM.

The minutes of the meeting of October 24 were approved with 24 votes and 3 abstentions. Robin proposed passing the minutes of the executive session and Ian Coupal seconded. The minutes were passed with 15 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

Tim Sutton presented an update on GSS ad-hoc committees: He said they will reshuffle the topics so that the committees are aligned around interest shown by students and touch on all problems that students face. He passed a sign-up sheet asking those interested to sign up on working on these topics. Joe Sapp asked how the purpose of these committees was decided. Tim replied that the committees’ roles came out of issues raised by the senate meeting, and they were further reorganized based on discussions by staff and the officers. Robin clarified that these committees were formed by the senate, but the organizing committee was formed by the Executive Committee in the summer as an ad-hoc committee. Christoph Krumm asked how the goals of these committees differ from those already served by various university agencies such as the Office of Professional Development. Tim said the goals depend on the committee itself and would need to be defined further by each committee, but they would work alongside existing offices like the OPD and address any lacunae that these university offices may have. John McCarthy said the Graduate School would welcome a GSS committee on teaching and professional development, and the OPD would love to work with them.
New VP election: Ghazah Abbasi announced that she will be stepping down at the end of the semester, and that elections will be held according to the bylaws. She asked the VP candidates to present their statements and answer any questions.

Danielle Allessio introduced herself and said she had been at UMass a long time, in different roles as an employee and student. She worked with GEO and was interested in social justice and equity issues. In GEO she helped to bargain contracts. She said she will help GSS by working with closely with the administration and use her leadership experience at UAW and GEO, including a lot of committee experience. She said she will also work on the strategic plan.

Avery Fürst said she was a student in the Labor studies program and an instructor in German. She said her priority was to work with GEO on contract, to work on issues of fees and healthcare. She said she will work with the student coalition on issues around strategic plan and other student representation issues.

Samantha Sterba said she was a 4th year student in in Economics. She has experience in EGSO, helping in allocating funding and hiring. She said she will continue work on strategic plan, on inclusive education, on common issues between departments and will continue work on organizing with undergraduates as well. She will also focus on issues such as SHIP, housing and the strategic plan.

Ghazah called for questions for the candidates. Juan Manuel Ruiz-Hau asked how the candidates would address the problem of having increased pay rates as grad student employees, but then losing out to lower paid non-GEO employees in finding assistantships, due to costs to hiring departments. Danielle said she thinks the funds for hiring grad students are separate from professional and classified employees but is otherwise not sure of the answer. Avery replied that unionization only takes pay up for everyone, so our rising wages will only take wages up for everyone. Samantha said that while it was true that it was a lot cheaper to hire adjuncts, we should take this up as an issue in GEO and in barganing.

Faune Albert asked what experiences each candidate has had with GSS thus far. Danielle said she had worked with GSS as a GEO staff member. Avery said she was involved with undergraduate activist groups, and with GSS through those coalitions. Samantha said she had no experience with GSS as such, but she was connected through EGSO. Danielle also added that she started the first GSO in her department.

Travis Salley asked how each candidate sees the relationship of the VP with the President. Danielle said she hopes the VP and President will work as a team, like co-chairs in GEO. She said she has worked with Robin in her role as a GEO staff member. Avery said that working with the President may be a mentor-mentee relationship in the first few weeks. Samantha said she didn’t know the officers personally but was interested in the work they do. Ghazah clarified that thus far there has not been a hierarchy as such among the officer positions; just different roles; and that the officers have supported each other to create a collaborative working experience.
Ghazah then asked the candidates how they see the work that GSS does as distinct from the work of GEO. Danielle said GSS represents all student-workers in many more aspects than just employment, and GEO only deals with the work aspect. Avery said she sees GSS as taking power through the Trustees and the university structure, with a focus on students as a whole rather than as student workers. Samantha said GEO protects us as workers, GSS as students, in our role as academics, students, teachers, etc. Robin clarified that there were roughly 4200 tax-paying graduate students and only 2500 of them were GEO members, so not all students are workers.

Ghazah presented an update on the open forum: she said it was an important and useful conversation, lasting about 2 hours. She read out the meeting notes. She spoke about the dialogue on neoliberalism and the university and said the dialogue is an attempt to take this conversation further. Tim added that they are planning to form a new GSO to continue this conversation in different disciplines and take forward the discussion about the changes to the university, and its relation to the economy, governance structures, etc.

**Motions:**

Adina Giannelli introduced a motion to approve a funding request from the African Graduate Students and Scholars Association (AGASA). She said the finance committee has reviewed the request and recommends approval.

Yetunde Ajao spoke about the AGASA and this event which is a thanksgiving celebration for socializing, and to increase visibility of African cultures, and interaction of African students among themselves. It includes collaborating with African faculty as well. Jared Starr added that all due diligence has been done, and that we have enough funds still left in the ad hoc budget. Faune moved to approve and Tim seconded. The motion passed unanimously with 34 votes in favor.

Adina introduced an ad hoc funding request from the Environmental Conservation Graduate Students Organization for departmental events, including a coffee social and grad student and faculty member social. She said the committee recommends with one abstention due to conflict of interest of a committee member being from the same organization seeking funding.

Luisa Galindo spoke about the EcoGSO and the proposed events. She said they have been holding events from their own funds, but want to expand their activities to have more career panels and talks, and for professional needs in the department. Jared clarified that his abstention was because he is from the same department and added that the GSO has been doing invaluable work. He also said it was a new GSO and that is why they don’t have any line-item funding this year. Mike Clauss moved to approve and Faune seconded. The motion passed with 32 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

Tim introduced a motion to create 5 student trustee votes in the Board of Trustees. He said it was modeled after an SGA motion. The motion was to support current bills in the
State House and Senate to create new voting trustees. He explained the background to the motion and reasons for it.

Ian Coupal asked if the faculty senate has voted on this issue. Tim replied that they haven’t but that we should work towards that. Jared asked how many trustees there are and Tim replied that there were 22 currently, including students. Maureen Gallagher asked how trustees are appointed and Tim said they were appointed by the Governor, and Robin added that this was except for the student trustees who are elected. Ian Coupal moved to approve, and Chelsea Sams seconded. The motion passed unanimously with 33 votes.

**Announcements:**

Tim announced a GEO rally on Friday about late paychecks and the GEO membership meeting tonight at 5.30 PM.

Robin said GSS is tabling throughout campus, in different buildings, and asked senators interested in tabling to contact the office.

Craig Bidiman announced the video documentation projects, as a replacement for the Voice. He also announced a senator mixer.

Ian Coupal said a constituent had asked about free grad student access to sporting events. Robin clarified that such access is not free and undergrads actually pay for this through their fees.

Robin made other announcements about a teach-in, dialogue series, lobby day and the senator mixer. He also announced that the Dean of Students’ office and the SORC is providing support and counseling for those affected by the typhoon in the Philippines.

Ghazah announced that a student from Comparative Literature wants editors for a magazine on radical pedagogy, and will meet today at 4 PM in Bartlett. 15.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.17 PM.