GSA Assembly Meeting Minutes for November 6 2020

The meeting was called to order at 5:01pm by the Assembly Speaker, Heather Sussman, and began with RGSO attendance and then proceeded with the agenda.

1. Approval of the October 2020 meeting minutes

Discussion on this motion included:
- There were no questions nor comments on the October meeting minutes. Therefore, the motion went straight to a vote.

Vote results:

Yes: 18  No: 0  Abstain: 2

Therefore, the motion on the approval of the October 2020 meeting minutes has passed.

2. The Assembly Speaker then asked if anyone wanted to add anything to the agenda, likely for a Public Comment Section. There were two requests:
- An Assembly Representative inquired if we could discuss the Pooled Testing Program as part of the ongoing effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. There was an email sent to many graduate students a week earlier about mandatory participation and how failure to participate could lead to disciplinary action. This was added as an agenda item for the end of the meeting.
- An Assembly Representative inquired if a committee could be formed to oversee the budget and how allocations were made. The Assembly Speaker stated that it is the job of the E-board to determine allocation, and it is the job of the Assembly to determine if the allocations are fair and make sure the E-board sticks to their budget lines. Additionally, an agenda item for the meeting was to approve the revised 2020-2021 budget, so if any further changes were deemed necessary, they could be stated then. Therefore, this was not added as an agenda item.

3. Approval of the 2020-2021 E-board Strategic Plan

At the October meeting, this motion was tabled so that the E-board could provide more specific details to their Strategic Plan, such as who would address each of their goals.

Discussion on this motion included:
- The GSA President wanted to highlight something in her plan. The Wages and Benefits Committee reports to GSA about the status of graduate student employment. One goal of hers is to have a better partnership between GSA and GSEU. She thinks that someone from GSEU could be the Wages and Benefits committee head. A few Assembly representatives voiced opinions and said this was a good idea.
- There was a question about the Treasurer’s goal about acquiring an IRS EIN number so GSA could files taxes separately from UAS. The Treasurer stated that UAS does not want to file the taxes for GSA anymore, so GSA will do it on its own. The President and
Treasurer are currently working on this and once it’s set up, the next President and Treasurer would file the 2021 taxes together. Currently, they are trying to obtain legal counsel for help. The University legal counsel will not help due to a conflict of interest, so they are looking into external options. The Student Association (SA) has done something similar in the past, so will likely reach out to them as well.

- There was another question about the GSA fees on the President’s goals. The President stated that every two years the GSA fee is up for a vote to continue or not, and this year there is a vote. She wants to make sure all graduate students know how this fee is used.

Vote results:

Yes: 17  No: 0  Abstain: 1

Therefore, the motion on the approval of the 2020-2021 E-board Strategic Plan has passed.

4. Approval of the 2020–2021 Revised Budget

Discussion on this motion included:

- The Treasurer first explained the changes that were made, which included: 1) increasing contingency budget from 8% to 10%, 2) increasing RGSO funding from $500 to $1000 for the year so that RGSOs can host small, virtual events, which are most conducive given social distancing guidelines right now, 3) increasing President discretionary budget, which would possibly be used for the legal counsel, 4) decreasing the paper allocation budget since students are not on campus to print nearly as much, 5) increasing VP discretionary in order to possibly allocate more to RGSO funding, 6) decreasing the programming budget since virtual events will not cost as much as in-person, and 7) increasing the branding budget since many E-board members have the goal to make GSA more visible.

- A question was asked how would branding be done. Currently thinking about making GSA masks, pens, pencils, and/or mugs.

- A question was asked why the programming budget did not decrease more. It did not decrease more because the Spring semester still needs to be considered and perhaps in-person events may be possible later on, but do not know at this time. Therefore, it is better to have the money allocated and not use it, than not have it allocated and therefore not have enough in the programming budget if in-person events can happen.

- Another question was asked how many office managers (OMs) we have. GSA has 3 OMs. A further question was asked why the budget allocation was so high for OMs. It was stated that the OMs do a lot of behind-the-scenes work that allows the GSA function and they receive an hourly rate pay.

- Another question was asked if we have used any programming money yet. So far, GSA has not, but there will likely be an EI/programming event in November.

Vote results:

Yes: 18  No: 0  Abstain: 2

Therefore, the motion on the approval of the 2020-2021 revised budget has passed.
5. Confirmation of the Grants and Programming Chairs

Discussion on this motion included:
- The Judicial Board chair stated there was some miscommunication about the appointment of these positions since they were vacant, but there was not a President-Elect yet.
- Both appointees introduced themselves, stated what they have done so far with GSA, and briefly reiterated their goals.
- There were no questions nor comments from the Assembly Representatives

Vote results for the confirmation of the Grants Chair:
Yes: 17  No: 0  Abstain: 1

Vote results for the confirmation of the Programming Chair:
Yes: 15  No: 2  Abstain: 0

Therefore, the motion on the approval of the confirmation of the Grants and Programming Chairs has passed.

6. Officer Reports

Discussion:
- Each officer briefly highlighted a few items from their report.
- A large portion of discussion was the event that the VP and EI Chair are planning to host: a virtual RGSO fair. The goal is to increase awareness of members of RGSOs to other RGSOs as well as graduate students in general to know what RGSOs they can join. RGSOs have been asked to fill out a survey about which dates may work best for the event.

7. Approval of the Treasurer Report:

Discussion on this motion included:
- One question about what expected income was. It was stated this is the amount GSA expects to receive from GSA fees for the year.

Vote results:
Yes: 15  No: 0  Abstain: 1

Therefore, the motion on the approval of the Treasurer’s report has passed.

At this point, the formal agenda was finished. The Assembly Speaker moved to discuss the Public Comment about the Pooled Testing Program. Discussion on this included:
• There was an email sent to many graduate students who are not taking in-person classes/not coming to campus that mandated these students participate in the Pooled Testing Program and if they did not, they could face disciplinary action.
• While this was intended to address a recent spike in COVID-19 cases in the Albany area, a new waiver has been made for this program, which entails that students who fill it out, will not go to campus at all for the remainder of the semester.
• The waiver was circulated at the meeting and will be sent to all graduate students in an email via the GSA listserv.

One other item was raised that the VP and Ray Webb from Student Activities will have a Meet and Greet soon for RGSO leadership to attend. More details to follow.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.