



Graduate Student Senate

University of Connecticut

Graduate Student Senate Minutes **February 13, 2006**

I. Call to Order

Vice President Sopcak called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

II. Approval of Minutes – January 30, 2005

The minutes were approved as written.

III. Recognition of Senators

IV. Executive Committee Reports

a. President – James Bourbeau

- Budgets, spending, and finances

President Bourbeau informed the senate that in past years the GSS has been overspending to decrease the budget surplus. The GSS will need to reduce spending in the coming years to avoid a deficit. Several options are available to reduce spending, and the first involves approval of budgets. It is believed that a lot of the money that gets frozen by being set aside for budgets is not actually spent. The benefit of budgets is that less time is spent at each meeting discussing special allocations. However, the process is unjust because a lot of money is allocated that comes from first year graduate students that have not even come to campus. In addition, too much money is allocated on certain events because of the number of events considered at one time. There are three options for budgets: keep the process, modify it, or eliminate department/organization budgets. Modifications include penalties for not spending money allocated; cap the amount requested; eliminate the rollover process, which complicates the bookkeeping process. A second option for reducing spending is to reduce funds for GAIN. This event costs a lot of money (~\$6000-\$7000) but is very popular for new graduate students. James feels that too much of the budget goes toward something that shouldn't be funded by GSS to welcome new students. This should be the university's responsibility, not that of GSS. Senator Morrill asked if GSS pays for everything. James replied that the grad school pays for punch & snacks at information fair, which is ~\$200-\$300, but most of the rest is picked up by the GSS. James promised senators a breakdown of spending at the next meeting.

- Change to administrative assistant position

Right now it is $\frac{3}{4}$ assistantship, was formerly $\frac{1}{2}$ assistantship. The increase in hours was made to reduce amount of work required of the treasurer. Returning the position to 10 hours per week would eliminate several thousand dollars of spending. The stipend for treasurer would return to \$1000 (double what it is now).

b. Activities Director – Anuthep Pasura

- Activities update

Activities Director Pasura reminded senators that there will be an ice cream social tomorrow from 3-5pm in the grad lounge (SU 110). Dairy bar ice cream will be served.

March 25 will be the semi-formal and details will be provided at the next meeting.

V. Standing Committee Reports

VI. External Committee Reports

a. Commencement Committee (Andrea Knorr)

Three important issues were discussed at this meeting that concerned graduate students:

1. No guest tickets will be issued for the May 2006 graduate commencement. This does not mean that guests will not be allowed, but rather, the number of guests is essentially unlimited. This change is due to the fact that there are often 3,000-4,000 empty seats in Gampell Pavilion, so it does not make sense to limit the number of guests a student can bring. If this new policy causes a problem, the issue will be reconsidered.

2. To decrease the amount of disorder at the ceremony, advisors will still be allowed to hood degree recipients, but a photographer will not capture this during the ceremony. There will be a time specified before or after the ceremony to capture this event in a picture.

3. Andrea proposed that the committee reexamine the possibility of having a December commencement for graduate students. The committee, in general, is largely in favor of the idea, but of course must consider how many students would attend and if this would affect attendance at the May ceremony. Other considerations include extra staff and reserving the proper facility. In past years the main opponent of this idea has been President Austin.

b. Scholastic Standards Committee (Pete Chidester)

Issues discussed this semester have included plagiarism and academic misconduct; undergraduates as TAs; student evaluation of intersession and summer courses; deleting from the catalogue courses that have not been taught for more than two years and will not be offered in the subsequent year. This last issue is important to graduate students, as many classes are not offered every year.

Right now a big issue is academic integrity. What is the definition of academic misconduct? What is the policy for dealing with it? The professor should not have to deal with all steps of the process.

Undergrads as TAs. Many senators expressed the opinion that they do not want undergrads competing for positions of grads. The committee feels that undergrads shouldn't be evaluating peers or having access to private information of peers. Senator Fuhrel asked if they get paid as much as grad students. This is unclear but also unlikely. Senator Sabadini feels that this is the university's attempt to get work done cheaply. She clarified that there's no way that undergrads could get paid as much as grad students because of the fringe benefit contribution (the amount of money that must be allocated to pay for benefits for graduate assistant labor). Senator Fuhrel asked if departments are short on students, why they can't get students from other similar departments.

VII. Issues Forum (10 minute limit)

a. GSS spending and department/organization budgets

Senator Bernath expressed that he is not in favor of scrapping budgets. The Linguistics Club has colloquia every month, so the budget process is helpful.

Senator Scott also likes the budget process. Philosophy has colloquia and was able to have a conference since money was guaranteed a year in advance. Senator Scott acknowledged that the process could use some modification.

Senator Sabadini said there used to be a way to have special allocations for more than one event at a time. This is essentially like a budget for repeated events.

Senator Morrill asked if budget requests were subject to different rules than special allocations. President Bourbeau said there may be, but he is unaware of them. He clarified that GSS doesn't spend money on capital expenses such as machines or things that cannot be consumed.

Senator Polonsky asked how equally money is distributed across departments. President Bourbeau replied that some departments get >\$1000 for events such as conferences.

Senator Sabadini pointed senators to the Finance Policies and Procedures to be familiar with the budget process before discussion at the next meeting. Treasurer Jura noted that these files are also available on the GSS website.

Senator Scott expressed his opinion that reducing the number of hours for the administrative assistant and eliminating budget rollovers are no-brainer fixes to reduce spending.

President Bourbeau clarified that he is not concerned with how much is spent, but with the budget process itself.

Parliamentarian Thomson moved to extend by 2 minutes. Senator Sabadini seconded.

President Bourbeau said that 90% of money allocated for budget events that happened last fall was spent. For fall special allocation requests, where the event did indeed take place, only 72% of approved money was spent.

Discussion tabled to the next meeting.

VIII. Old Business

a. Financial aid (see attachment prepared by Laura Sabadini)

Senator Sabadini explained the attached document. The attached numbers are very low, such as the monthly transportation cost. Senator Morrill pointed out that car insurance alone is at least \$60/month. There was some discussion whether monthly costs should be based on 9 or 12 months. Many graduate students are at school year round. Senator Sabadini asked that there be more communication with the administration and Jim Henkel. Senator Polonsky asked if there was anything that could actually be done. President Bourbeau thought so, especially since this is relating to federal loans. Senator Polonsky asked if graduate assistantship is based on these figures. Senator Sabadini said she did not know since level 1 10-hour is below poverty level. Senator Morrill felt that this is an important issue and that the numbers were probably more geared to undergraduates. Senator Schultz said that someone from financial aid does calculate this, it is not from an outside source. Senator Fuhrel asked how much on campus housing costs for grads. Hilltop is \$4k/semester for 2BR, which includes phone, internet, cable, heat, hot water. These residences cost \$2k for summer. Meetings with an RA/CA are required, and no meals are included in this price.

IX. New Business

- a. Appointment of graduate student to Master Plan Advisory Committee (Capital Projects Advisory Committee) – Andrew Polonsky
- b. Appointment of graduate student to Graduate Faculty Council – Aaron Schultz
- c. GSS 05/06 – 11 That the Graduate Student Senate allocate \$135.46 to the Graduate Association of Public Policy Students

West Hartford students contribute money but rarely request or use their funds. Senator Bernath motioned to end discussion, and Senator Scott. Motion passed unanimously.

X. Other Business

XI. Adjournment

Senator Bernath moved to adjourn, seconded by Senator Morrill. Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.

UConn Estimated Cost of Living for Graduate Students, as prepared by Laura Sabadini

Listed Yearly UConn Cost 2005-2006 ¹		
Direct Costs	In-State	Out-of-State
Tuition	\$7,110	\$18,478
University and Student Fees	\$1,366	\$1,366
Subtotal Direct Costs	\$8,476	\$19,844
Estimate Indirect Costs		
	In-State	Out-of-State
Books and Supplies	\$800	\$800
Transportation	\$725	\$1,100
Room and Board	\$7,936	\$7,936
Miscellaneous	\$1,800	\$1,800
Subtotal Indirect Costs	\$11,261	\$11,636
Estimated Total Expenses	\$19,937	\$31,680

Calculated Monthly UConn Cost 2005-2006 ³		
Direct Costs	In-State	Out-of-State
Tuition	\$593	\$1,540
University and Student Fees	\$114	\$114
Subtotal Direct Costs	\$706	\$1,654
Estimate Indirect Costs		
	In-State	Out-of-State
Books and Supplies	\$67	\$67
Transportation	\$60	\$92
Room and Board	\$661	\$661
Miscellaneous	\$150	\$150
Subtotal Indirect Costs	\$938	\$970
Estimated Total Expenses	\$1,661	\$2,640

Listed Yearly UConn Cost 2006-2007 ²		
Direct Costs	In-State	Out-of-State
Tuition	\$7,992	\$20,772
University and Student Fees	\$1,518	\$1,518
Subtotal Direct Costs	\$9,510	\$22,290
Estimate Indirect Costs		
	In-State	Out-of-State
Books and Supplies	\$800	\$800
Transportation	\$726	\$1,100
Room and Board	\$8,864	\$8,864
Miscellaneous	\$2,000	\$2,000
Subtotal Indirect Costs	\$12,390	\$12,764
Estimated Total Expenses	\$21,900	\$35,054

Calculated Yearly UConn Cost Increase 06-07 ⁴		
Direct Costs	In-State	Out-of-State
Tuition	\$882	\$2,294
University and Student Fees	\$152	\$152
Subtotal Direct Costs	\$1,034	\$2,446
Estimate Indirect Costs		
	In-State	Out-of-State
Books and Supplies	\$0	\$0
Transportation	\$1	\$0
Room and Board	\$928	\$928
Miscellaneous	\$200	\$200
Subtotal Indirect Costs	\$1,129	\$1,128
Estimated Total Expenses	\$1,963	\$3,374

Applying UConn's estimates to real life

Housing and utilities:

06 CT electricity rate increases: approx 27% per customer⁵, CL&P says: 1/06 = 18%; 4/06 = "additional 5% increase"⁶
 2005 Windham County 1 BR apt fair market value = \$618⁷

The 05-06 "Room and Board" estimate leaves just \$43/month for all utilities and food (after 1BR fair market rent)

Gas and transportation:

For Feb 04, 2006, CT is #6 for highest prices for regular gas (\$2.48)⁸

Average gas price (regular) in Hartford area for Feb 05 = \$2.00, for Feb 06 = \$2.47⁹

Even at *last year's price*, filling up with 10 gallons of regular gas two times in one month = \$40

Garage parking¹⁰ on campus = \$300/yr = \$25/month

UConn's Current year "Transportation" estimate doesn't even cover last year's gas and parking

References & notes:

1 <http://financialaid.uconn.edu/cnt-cost/graduate05-06.php>

2 http://financialaid.uconn.edu/cnt-cost/ugrad_storrs06-07.php

3 monthly cost calculated by dividing values in 05-06 table by 12

4 increase obtained by subtracting 05-06 values from 06-07 values

5 [http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/dockcurr.nsf/0/b764d16b9b2bda72852570cf007493b9/\\$FILE/Int1.doc](http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/dockcurr.nsf/0/b764d16b9b2bda72852570cf007493b9/$FILE/Int1.doc)

6 Available through FAQ page at CL&P <http://www.cl-p.com/>

7 Windham data avail at <http://www.nlihc.org/orr2005/area.php?state%5B%5D=CT>

8 <http://www.fuelgaugereport.com/sbsavg.asp>

9 <http://www.fuelgaugereport.com/CTmetro.asp>

10 <http://www.park.uconn.edu/sgarage.htm>

ATTENDANCE

James Bourbeau	President	Franklin Scott	Philosophy
Amy Sopcak	Vice President	Pedram Rezamand	Animal Science
Andrea Knorr	Secretary	Laura Sabadini	Psychology
Matt Jura	Treasurer	Aaron Schultz	Psychology
Julia Thomson	Parliamentarian	Andrea Fuhrel	Psychology
Anuthep Pasura	Activities Director	Cassandra Godman	MCB
		Sarah Miller	Career Services
Mark Oliver	Education	Andrew Polonsky	Physics
Mindy Weidman	History	Jeff Bernath	Linguistics
Kathryn Theiss	EEB	Nick McNamara	Geography
Rebecca Parker	Fine Arts	Brooke Morrill	English
Malia Bajpai	Political Science	Peter Chidester	English