

1. GSA President Tanja Aho calls the meeting to order at 6:38pm.

2. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes from the March 7, 2018 Senate Meeting
 - Motion: Biological Sciences
 - Second: Graduate Indian Student Association (GISA)
 - In favor: 64; Oppose: 0; Abstain: 5
 - Motion passes

3. New Business: Approval of the 2018-2019 Budgets

- GSA Vice President Connor Walters states that due to the illness of the GSA Treasurer, the budget discussion should be moved to the front of the meeting, so that she may leave earlier.
- Motion to move budget discussion to the first order of business
 - Motion: Vice President
 - Second: English
 - In favor: 65; Oppose: 1; Abstain: 1
 - Motion passes
- GSA Treasurer Jen Schechter states that there are three budgets: one in case of referendum failure, one in case of referendum success but fee increase failure, and one in case of referendum success and fee increase success. Jen reviews with the Senate how the budget should be read. Jen then discusses the necessity of the fee increase for the maintenance of current services, and how the amount requested would maintain the GSA fee as the lowest student government fee on campus and the lowest GSA fee in the SUNY system, while also covering the budget for several years.
 - A student asks why, even in the fee increase budget, the programming allocation goes down.
 - Jen states that this does not represent a cut, but instead a change in allocation that better reflects the lower costs of programming that GSA has been able to reach with Courtney's work as Programming Coordinator.
 - A student asks about the budget line related to student fees.
 - Jen states that the total amount of fee money GSA receives is based on enrollment, which is expected to continue to go down. If enrollment increases instead, GSA will be in an even better financial situation.
- Jen introduces the referendum fail budget, explaining that students have the ability to vote for the student activity fee to become voluntary. A voluntary fee means no guaranteed budget, and thus the budget for this situation is aimed at maintaining the GSA as an organization.
 - A student asks if the blank spaces on the budgets indicate no spending.
 - Jen clarifies that yes, blank spaces on any of tonight's budgets represent no money being allocated toward those lines.
 - The student follows up clarifying that if the fee increase does not pass, club budgets will be made \$0.
 - Jen confirms.
 - Another student asks to clarify if this means that the \$21 fee increase must be approved tonight for clubs to maintain budgets.
 - Jen clarifies that tonight's meeting approves the budgets – how money will be spent in accordance with voting results. It does not constitute the vote on the fee itself.
 - A student states that last year, the fee increase failed. He then states that this year, a larger fee increase is being asked for, and if it isn't passed, clubs will lose their budgets.
 - Connor clarifies that the purpose of the Senate meeting is also to give the Senate a chance to propose and vote on amendments to any budget. The presented budgets were designed by the Finance Committee, but the Senate is allowed to design and approve alternative budgets if they believe those to be better.
 - Jen states that this decision was made by the Finance Committee based on the belief that it would equally effect all students.
 - After a quiet period, GSA Assistant Office Manager Stephanie George clarifies that the fee increase is being voted on as part of the upcoming officer elections, and will be a vote outside of the Senate, for all graduate students. Tonight's vote will not determine whether or not there is a fee increase.
 - A student states that he foresees "getting out the vote" to be a big issue, and would like to know what is being done to promote the fee increase, given that a fee increase did not pass last year.
 - Connor states that he has reached out directly to the leadership of several clubs, particularly larger clubs. He states that he has met with two of them, and many have not replied to him. He states that he wants to meet with any club that is interested in having him to discuss the fee increase. He states there are also flyers ready to be hung around campus.
 - Tanja adds that posts have been going up on Facebook on a daily basis, and that the weekly newsletter has been informing people of GSA services and the importance of the fee. Tanja states that if this information isn't reaching students, it speaks to a need for Senators to also discuss the fee increase with their clubs and to make sure emails are being forwarded.

- The student states that because of the closeness of the vote, it is possible that a single club could vote down the fee increase.
 - Tanja says this is correct, and a large, supportive club could also pass the fee increase.
- The student says this is also true, but is wondering if there has been any data collection on GSA's end to better understand why the fee increase failed. He states that it seems like people are not taking enough responsibility to make sure it will pass, and is concerned that a single club could potentially sink the entire fee increase.
 - Tanja states that again, the power is that supportive clubs who can bring out more voters can singularly pass the fee increase. This is why the GSA Executive Board has been reaching out and has talked to clubs and club leadership, particularly of the largest clubs.
- A student asks what percentage of the student body participated in the vote last year.
 - Stephanie states that it was less than 10%.
- The student responds that then, if voter turnout increases, the chances of referendum and fee increase success increase.
 - There is a response that it could go either way.
- The student clarifies that most people understand that GSA funding allows for good things for students, and that more funding for GSA means more funding for conferences, and other GSA services.
 - Tanja states that it is easy to make clear that keeping the fee mandatory keeps services running, but it is harder to make an argument for a fee increase because some services can be maintained without a fee increase.
- A student asks to clarify what is being voted on tonight if not the fee increase.
 - Jen clarifies that senators are voting on the budgets.
 - Stephanie further clarifies that the budgets determine how money will be spent following each possible fee outcome. Tanja confirms.
 - Connor states that a no-fee-increase budget passing would go into effect if, next week, it was voted that there be no fee increase.
 - Jen states that the budgets can be adjusted by the Senate, and funds can be reallocated during the year. She states that if a miraculous carryover were to happen, it would be added to the budget and change spending.
- A student states that the budgets are important because they can be used to explain the consequences of each vote in material ways.
 - Tanja reminds the Senate that their vote is final, and they have the ability to change the budgets recommended by the Finance Committee.
- A student asks for a breakdown of the student stipend line and why it doubled in the past six years.
 - Jen states that the student stipend line covers the payment for all student employees, excepting hourly employees, and that several positions were added during the period that the sudden increase in the line is seen. Additionally, all student positions received raises, causing a further bump.
- A student asks about the decreasing club budget lines.
 - The E-board clarifies that enrollment is dropping each year, rather than going up. Because departmental club budgets partially come from the number of students in the department, this decrease in enrollment leads to a decrease in funds. Jen adds that the line for club budgets will be adjusted if enrollment increases, and clubs will receive funding in the same proportional way they always have.
- A student asks what services might be provided by GSA.
 - Jen reviews current services, including SBI Legal, SBI Medical Insurance, SBI Pharmacy, the SBI Safety Shuttle, dry cleaning through SBI, and the GSA editorial service.
 - Connor adds that students should have referendum information flyers listing the services GSA provides, which Stephanie clarifies are in Senator's packets.
- A student asks about the officer manager line.
 - Jen states that the office managers have five-year contracts guaranteeing a raise, which were signed three E-boards ago. They get raises as compensation for some benefits that they do not receive. There is also a legally mandated cost-of-living increase. Additionally, all employee lines include payroll taxes, and office manager lines also include payment for benefits.
- A student asks that if this is the case, why would the line decrease so drastically in the voluntary fee budget.
 - Stephanie states that it would reflect an office manager being fired.
 - Jen says that it reflects the cost of having one office manager, who might be part-time. The biggest use of the fee in the voluntary fee outcome will be to make outstanding payments that have been promised, such as with MDRF.
- A student asks if we could mitigate the damages from breaking that contract.
 - Tanja states that they are at-will employees, given that New York is an at-will state.
 - Jen states that they are contracted employees.
- A student states that this goes back to discussion earlier in the year, when Anastasia was Treasurer, about which circumstances allow for the termination of an employee contract.

- Connor states that he would not be comfortable getting into the details of interpreting staff contracts without GSA's legal counsel present.
 - A student expresses concern about making sure the fee increase would be used in the best possible way, using an example of an increase to the programming line being unnecessary.
 - Jen clarifies that the surplus from the fee increase has not yet been allocated, and would be a matter for the Senate to decide next year. She mentions that an increase to the programming line wouldn't be necessary, and that she would like to see the Services Committee examine the needs of students.
 - A student asks where the surplus fee increase is going, currently.
 - Jen states that it isn't allocated anywhere. The purpose of the fee increase is to balance the GSA budget without reducing services. Any extra money on top of that balance would be added to whatever line(s) that the Senate decides is needed.
 - The ability of Senators to propose alternative budget cuts is emphasized again.
 - Tanja states that after repeatedly mentioning it in meetings with the graduate school, the graduate school has agreed to start using philanthropic efforts to donate to the GSA. However, there is little progress on the school itself providing more conference funding opportunities. This is typically a department-by-department issue.
 - Jen states that it can be challenging convincing the university to contribute to the GSA because the GSA is a wholly separate institution from the university, and university administration does not control any aspect of the GSA.
 - Connor adds that the democratic aspects of GSA and SBI are often overlooked, as GSA is one of the few areas where students have a say in how their fee money is used.
 - It is suggested that the budgets be voted on individually.
 - A student expresses the concern that while there doesn't seem like a better place to make a cut, it seems unfair that club budgets would take the biggest cut in the event of a fee increase failing.
 - Jen states that it was the Finance Committee's view that other departmental club budget cuts, such as a cut to the base amount of funding but not to the per-student funding, would disproportionately harm small departments. These departments also would have fewer students to vote and try to protect their interests.
 - A student proposes amending the no-fee-increase budget to have: \$50,000 in the departmental club line, to be split evenly among clubs; have nothing in the club funding line; and to lower conference funding to \$102,000.
 - After some discussion about international and special interest clubs, a further adjustment is made to give \$45,000 to departmental clubs, \$2,500 to international clubs, and \$2,500 to special interest clubs.
- Motion to approve the fee increase and referendum fail budgets
 - Motion: Chemistry
 - Second: Microbiology
 - In favor: 55; Oppose: 10; Abstain: 3
 - Motion passes
- A student asks if it makes sense to postpone the decision on the no-fee-increase budget to late April, after the vote happens.
 - Another student suggests that it is helpful to know what the budget will be in providing information to club constituents about the consequences of voting.
 - A reminder is given as to the amended no-fee-increase budget on the floor.
- Motion to approve the amended no-fee increase budget
 - Motion: English
 - Second: Transnational Studies
 - In favor: 47; Oppose: 15; Abstain: 8
 - Motion Passes

4. Announcements

- GSA Programming Coordinator, Courtney Doxbeck, briefly reviews the GSA events planned through July.
 - April 6th- Java Junction
 - Free Tim Horton's coffee and doughnuts for graduate students.
 - April 7th- Plant Nite at Pearl Street Grill & Brewery,
 - Tickets on sale now at the SBI Ticket Office for \$25 each. 2 per UB ID.
 - April 12th- Distinguished Speaker Series presents James Balog, 7:30pm at Alumni Arena
 - Free tickets available at the SBI Ticket Offices. 2 per UB ID.
 - April 13th- South Campus Siesta, 1:30 – 3:30pm in 105 Harriman Hall
 - Free food and drinks for graduate students at South Campus
 - April 15th- Buffalo Untapped
 - Free \$5 food voucher and beer/wine tastings for the first 300 graduate students in attendance
 - May 2nd- Distinguished Speaker Series presents Alan Alda
 - Free tickets will be available for graduate students at the SBI Ticket Offices. 2 per UB ID.

- May 4th- Java Junction (last one of the semester)
- June 15th- Buffalo Bisons Baseball Game vs. Rochester Red Wings
 - Tickets on sale April 30th at the SBI Ticket Offices for \$10 each.
- July 7th- Moondance Cruise
 - Tickets on sale May 14th at the SBI Ticket Offices for \$15 each.
- July 20th- Darien Lake
 - Tickets on sale June 4th at the SBI Ticket Offices for \$15 each.
- Macy McDonald from the Living Stipend Movement presents an update. They thank the GSA for passing a resolution in the previous meeting, and state that the Faculty Senate has also passed a resolution. There will be a protest occurring at Accepted Students Day on April 15th at 1pm in the Student Union.

5. Report of the President

- Tanja announces that there is a diversity summit taking place in May. Additionally, a task force is being created for the purpose of the stigma-free on-campus food pantry. Finally, Tanja reminds GAs and TAs that they are members of the Graduate Student Employee's Union and should take and sign membership cards. As part of the union, they are eligible for a professional development fund of up to \$1,000 per year.

6. Report of the Vice President

- Connor states that he has been meeting with clubs and club leadership, having reached out to a number of clubs, and that he is available to meet with any club that has questions. He asks that he be emailed to schedule one of those meetings.
- Connor thanks the Services Committee for their incredibly hard work this year.

7. Report of the Treasurer

- Tanja covers the report of the Treasurer due to Jen's illness.
- Funding Account Balances:
 - Special Activity: \$15,000, adjusted from \$18,000.00, to start, \$2,050.00 allocated this month, \$2,425.00 remaining
 - Interdepartmental Activity: \$2,000.00 to start, \$750.00 allocated this month, \$741.00 remaining
 - Symposia: \$15,000.00 to start, \$4,200.00 allocated this month, \$3,970.00 remaining
 - Scholarly Publication: \$5,000, adjusted from \$9,000.00, to start, \$0.00 allocated this month, \$1,000.00 remaining
 - Community Outreach: \$2,000 to start, \$750.00 allocated this month, \$750.00 remaining
 - Conferences:
 - 61 requests totaling \$22,067.95 requested for April, 61 applications approved for \$16,699.56
 - Beginning Balance: \$132,000.00; Remaining Balance \$21,062.09

8. Old Business

- No old business.

9. New Business

- Funding Requests
 - A representative from Hellenic GSA presents on their Greek Easter BBQ special activity.
 - Requested/recommended: \$1,200.00
 - A representative from Neuroscience presents on their Neuroscience Speaker Series special activity.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$850.00
 - A representative from Chemistry presents on their symposium.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$1,400.00
 - A representative from ELP presents on their symposium.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$1,400.00
 - A representative from Psychology presents on their symposium.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$1,400.00
 - A representative from Chemical and Biological Engineering presents on their interdepartmental activity with Biological Sciences, Biomedical Engineering, Chemistry, and Pharmaceutical Sciences.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$750.00
 - A representative from Psychology presents on their community outreach event.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$250.00
 - A representative from Political Science presents on their community outreach event.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$250.00
 - A representative from Linguistics presents on their community outreach event.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$250.00
- Motion to approve all funding requests as a block at the recommended amount
 - Motion: Chemistry
 - Second: Transnational Studies
 - In favor: 61; Oppose: 3; Abstain: 3
 - Motion passes

- Early Club Recognition
 - A representative from CSSA presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$650
 - A representative from GISA presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$650
 - A representative from Iranian GSA presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$650
 - Connor calls for a representative from Taiwanese GSA. Nobody comes forward. He says he will make a second call after other clubs present.
 - A representative from Cognitive Science presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$300
 - A representative from Computational Sciences presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$300
 - A representative from Graduate Poetics Group presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$300
 - A representative from MSTP presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$300
 - A representative from UB-EERI presents on their club.
 - Requested/Recommended: \$300
 - Connor makes another call for Taiwanese GSA, and states that if nobody is here to present on behalf of the club, it cannot receive early recognition tonight. Nobody comes forward.
- Motion to approve all clubs except for Taiwanese at the recommended amounts
 - Motion: Microbiology
 - Second: Linguistics
 - In favor: 68; Oppose: 0; Abstain: 1
 - Motion passes
- Election Committee Update
 - Election Committee Chair Ariel Noffke presents the ballot for senate approval.
 - Motion to approve the ballot
 - Motion: Transnational Studies
 - Second: Library and Information Science
 - In favor: 59; Oppose: 5; Abstain: 2
 - Motion passes
- Candidate Presentations
 - Jessie Coley, candidate for President, introduces herself. She states she is a first year PhD student in the Sociology department, having received her Masters last summer and having been at the university since 2013. She currently is a graduate instructor in the social sciences, teaching research methods. She identifies having previous leadership experience in Buffalo and is looking forward to bringing this experience to the university. She mentions the need for the living wage as one of the most pressing issues facing students.
 - Connor Walters, candidate for Vice President, introduces himself. He states that he is the current Vice President and is running for reelection. He says that the role of Vice President is largely internal support for clubs and for the organization itself, and identifies the importance of the staff of GSA. He says that it is important for him to be supportive of clubs, and that he is always open to hearing concerns from students and helping them however he can.
 - Joshua Joseph, candidate for Treasurer, introduces himself. He states he is a second year Electrical Engineering Masters student, and good with math. He states he has met with Jen and attended the Finance Committee meeting for the preparation of the budget, which gives him insight into the most tasking part of the Treasurer position. He plans to continue meeting with Jen to learn the ins and outs of the position, and recognizes her as a valuable resource.
- Candidate Questions and Answers
 - Stephanie asks about candidates' availability for office hours.
 - Jessie states she is typically on campus four days a week as she both teaches and is still in coursework. She states she will spend much of that time in the GSA office, and because she is typically on campus anyway, she can arrange meetings as needed.
 - Connor states that his in-office time varies depending on how much he is needed, but he keeps to a minimum of four hours a week. He adds that he also works frequently outside the office, whether via email or meeting with students or clubs. However, for set office hours where any student can walk in and visit without setting a meeting, he will keep four a week.
 - Josh states that he is willing to spend as much time in the office as is needed to complete the necessary work and to serve the GSA.

- A student asks Connor if the Services Committee will continue as a permanent fixture of the GSA.
 - Connor states that the Services Committee has the role of replacing ad hoc committees that would be formed around tasks. He states that this semester the Services Committee has been meeting every other week to plan around passing the fee increase. He says that next year he is unsure of the exact role of the Services Committee – if the fee increase passes, reaching out to students and figuring out what to do with that money will certainly be the first task; if the referendum fails, it might be figuring out which services to fund on whatever voluntary budget is received. He states the exact role of the Services Committee will be up in the air, but it will still exist and he will still work with them in whatever capacity is decided by the GSA and Senate.
- As a follow-up, the student asks if the Services Committee might be used as a tool to keep the GSA E-board informed of general student needs and opinions with regards to GSA.
 - Connor states that he had not previously considered this, but really likes the idea. He states that the Services Committee this year has provided extremely valuable feedback on what students in their departments are thinking, and that this helps to serve his goal of being open to student feedback. He states that he would love to have a diverse Services Committee next year that would be able to provide views as to what is happening on campus.
- A student asks for an update on a GSA handbook.
 - Connor states that the Vice President is the role that best fits the responsibility of creating the handbook. He states that the task had originally been a Services Committee task that was put on the side to advertise the fee increase. He says it will continue to be a project he works on, and that he still has contact information with people who could audit the handbook.
- A student asks what goals other candidates have for the year.
 - Jessy states that pushing for a living stipend is among her goals. She says that because of her experience in activism, she knows that showing up to argue for change is important, and states that she will show up as GSA President. She also adds that she knows food insecurity is an issue for graduate students, and sees the SBI Food Pantry efforts as a goal.
 - Josh states that his goal is to make the availability of funding more clear to students and to see service knowledge and utilization grow.
- A student states that there is a GSA resolution in support of a living stipend. They ask if the GSA has formally endorsed the living stipend movement in and of itself.
 - Tanja states that she believes the Senate passing the resolution, which was proposed by the living stipend movement, represents the GSA's formal endorsement.
- The student asks if there have been or will be any consequences to that endorsement in terms of pushback from university administration on the GSA.
 - Tanja states that the GSA has the freedom to endorse an opinion of its choice, so long as that opinion is legal (e.g. not discriminatory). She adds that GSA represents the collective voice of all grad students, beyond TAs and GAs, and that the GSA should be filling a different role from that of the Graduate Student Employees Union and the living stipend movement. Tanja says that the GSA regularly boosts the voices of the movement, however, and that she makes sure to note their efforts in meetings with administration and public statements.
- The student asks the candidates what they think of the possibility of unforeseen consequences should the GSA as a governing body become more openly aligned with the living stipend movement. They question whether the policy would be to stay the course and weather pushback, or to try and take a more neutral stance.
 - Jessy validates student concerns about pushback and states that she recognizes people have reason to not want to be identified while taking part in protests. Jessy states that the consequences people fear from their departments identifying their participation are unjust, as students should have the right to protest, but that it makes sense for students to fear them. She states that even if only as an individual (i.e. not representing the opinion of the GSA), she will continue to be present at protests and fight for a living wage.
 - Connor states that further alignment with the living stipend movement is up to the Senate, in his opinion. He states that the GSA has certainly endorsed the position of a living wage by passing the resolution. He states that the Senate should make the decision of if GSA officers will attend protests as representatives of GSA, though individual officers should have the freedom to decide if they want to attend when not representing GSA. He states that he expects the Senate would likely endorse having GSA officers represent GSA at protests, but that he would want formal Senate approval. He adds that it is valid to be concerned about pushback from administration, and that should the GSA become further aligned with the protest movement, it would be worth having a frank discussion with the Senate about benefits and consequences.
- Tanja asks Joshua if, given the soon-to-be-established non-profit status of the GSA, he has ideas for or experience with raising money from sources other than student fees.

- Joshua says he would likely start with people who are already donating to the university as a whole, as they already are passionate supporters of education, and many may have been, or in some cases, still are, graduate students.

10. Roll Call and Adjournment

- Students are reminded to please make sure to turn in their voting cards and clickers before leaving in order to be counted for Roll Call.
- Motion to Adjourn at 8:55pm
 - Motion: Chemistry
 - Second: Psychology
 - In favor: 53; Oppose: 2; Abstain: 1
 - Motion passes