

1. GSA Treasurer, Anastasia Stepanova, calls the meeting to order at 6:36pm

## 2. Senator Training

- The Assistant Office Manager, Stephanie George, is introduced to make a brief presentation about the Senate. She explains that all elected Senate seats must be filled at each meeting in order for a club's full attendance to be counted. This helps us to maintain quorum at meetings. If full attendance is missed at two consecutive meetings, then a club's funds will be frozen until they resume full attendance at a subsequent meeting. She explains that Senators are responsible for reporting back the information and topics discussed at Senate meetings to their constituents so that they can get feedback in order to vote in graduate students' best interests on major issues. This year we are going to be using clickers to tally all votes of the Senate so that voting cards do not have to be counted, which will hopefully speed things up a bit. Meetings will generally use a loose version of Robert's Rules of Order, utilizing motions and seconds in order to vote to approve or reject items of business. Only voting members of the Senate (Departmental and International club representatives, as Special Interest clubs are non-voting members) can make and/or second motions. The concept of block votes may also come up in the future when the Senate is voting on multiple request, such as funding applications, and when there are no issues with the individual items. This allows the Senate to pass multiple requests or items of business with one vote. If you are ever unclear about what is happening, or if you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

## 3. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes from the April 4, 2017 Senate Meeting
  - Motion: Transnational Studies
  - Second: Community Health & Health Behavior
  - In favor: 46; Oppose: 2; Abstain: 4
  - Motion passes

## 4. Announcements

- Anastasia announces that the GSA President is currently incapacitated and that the GSA Vice President resigned as of September 5<sup>th</sup>. Anastasia invites Tanja Aho, the temporarily incapacitated GSA President, to provide additional information about her situation.
  - Tanja explains that she is currently incapacitated because she is in the process of applying for a green card. She had expected it to have gone through by now, but due to the current political situation the government is not processing applications as quickly as they used to. She is hoping the situation will be resolved within the next month or two. She is not able to hold two positions on campus and was offered a TA line to teach. Seeing as how she cannot take off from teaching for two months, she had to make the difficult decision to incapacitate herself from the President's role. There is still a lot of advocacy work that she can do as a regular graduate student, and she will continue to work on those types of initiatives, such as food insecurity and emergency loans. Even though she is not currently your President she will keep working on your behalf. Up until yesterday she thought that her temporary absence would be fine because Anastasia and Amy would be able to take over her roles and responsibilities, however it is unfortunate that now Amy's resignation will overlap with her absence because that leaves only one GSA Executive Board member. The Senate will have to decide if they want to elect an Interim President in her stead for the next one to two months, whether they want to keep the position open, or whether they want to impeach her and remove her from office, in which case she is willing to resign at the Senate's request. Again, she is hoping that her green card will be approved in the next few months, but she cannot promise that it will happen. She apologizes for putting the organization in this situation.
  - Anastasia explains that according to the GSA Constitution (Article II Section 4.D.2. of the By-Laws) the Senate is required to appoint an Interim Officer to assure that a minimum of two Executive Committee offices are filled. However, the Senate may choose not to appoint an Interim Officer today, or at the October Senate meeting if they choose. She states that the Constitution has a contradiction in this regard. However, before proceeding to a motion on the Interim President, she would like to first go over the process of resignation in the Constitution because it may affect the Senate's decision. She explains that according to the GSA Constitution (Article II Section 4.C.) there is a separate procedure for resignation of officers. A Temporary Officer may be appointed by the E-board. That Temporary Officer will be in power only until the next Senate meeting when the Senate will elect the permanent replacement Vice President. She states that we have to hold the election in the Senate at the next Senate meeting because it has to be preceded by the call for nominations to allow people to submit their nominations for who they would like to be considered for the position. Because we were not able to send out the call for nominations with the Senate Agenda email one week before the meeting, due to Amy only resigning one day ago, we have to wait until the next Senate meeting in October. This means that there has to be a Temporary Vice President. Therefore, she would like to mention that the Temporary Vice President would be appointed by the E-board and because she is the only officer she has the power to appoint someone to that position. However, the other option is for the Senate to appoint an Interim President so that two offices would be filled and those two people would decide on a Vice President. Also the Senate would be able to decide whether or not they need to fill that position. Anastasia asks if there are any questions or if anything is unclear.

- There are no questions.
  - Anastasia again notes that she does not want the Senate to feel pressured to elect an Interim President today just to have a second officer in place, because definitely by the end of today we will have at least two officers in power.
- Motion to appoint an Interim President tonight
  - Motion: Library & Information Studies
  - Second: Anthropology
  - In favor: 31; Oppose: 17; Abstain: 6
  - Motion passes
- Anastasia calls for nominations for the Interim President position. She notes that nominees will serve until Tanja returns and must have attended at least two Senate meetings in the past twelve months.
  - Peter Farruggia from Public Health (dual degree in JD), Jennifer Schechter from Linguistics, and Connor Walters from Social Work all volunteer.
- Anastasia asks each candidate to give a brief introduction about themselves to the Senate.
  - Connor states that he wants to run for President because he read the concerns that were brought up in the VP's resignation email and knowing his own background in social ethics, he feels that it is really important that we are doing the right things, being transparent, and working with the student body. He wants to make sure that we are handling things in a responsible way and that we are doing the best that we can to serve our students openly, along with the efforts of the people who know what they are doing.
  - Peter states that he has been a Senator for a year and also served on the Finance Committee, so he has a pretty expansive knowledge of the workings of the GSA. Like Connor, he wants to make sure that the student body is getting the accurate information, that the students are being put first, that there is no real drama and stuff going on, and to make sure that we know students' concerns and help students be the best they can be here at UB.
  - Jen states that she is currently a staff member of the GSA as the Mark Diamond Research Fund Director. She states that she does not actually want to run for President per se, which is why the Interim position is really important to her because she already has an intimate knowledge of the GSA from working there. She is also vastly different from the E-board and butts heads with them a lot. She feels it is very important to have that kind of voice. She brings a lot of financial knowledge because she assisted in the creation of the GSA's budget last year, she has served on the Finance Committee, and she currently serves on the Services Committee. She has seen a lot of the struggles and actually agrees with what both of the other candidates have said, and with a lot of what Amy has said, but she also understands how important the GSA is to her. She is very passionate about the organization and wants to see it succeed, but wants to see it benefit students the most, and she thinks right now we need a change. We need someone to come in and say it's not working and we need to change it. She wants to do that with the students and not behind closed doors, and that is why it is important for her to have the chance to be in this interim position.
  - Anastasia states that she feels there is a conflict of interest because Jen is the current MDRF Director and what problems there would be with the grants.
    - Jen responds that she is really lucky to have an Assistant MDRF Director, Brittany, who has taken on a lot of the administrative duties, and she has been working with a lot of the students. Brittany has been willing to take over a lot of the duties of the Director. She also states that it is not actually a conflict of interest because it is allowed in the Constitution for a staff member to be an Executive Board member, basically because there would still be two other votes from the other officers. She can't vote on anything in MDRF as the Director, and the President doesn't vote on anything in MDRF either, so there is no conflict. And should there be any problems, Brittany is willing and able to step in and perform the duties of the position. She is also in the GSA office a lot.
- Anastasia calls the vote for the election of the Interim President, and the Senate votes as follows:
  - Connor Walters: 9
  - Peter Farruggia: 9
  - Jennifer Schechter: 36
  - 1 abstention
  - Jennifer Schechter is elected Interim President
- Anastasia announces that the Temporary Vice President position will be decided on by her and Jen and does not have to be done right now.
  - Jen asks if there is anything in the Constitution that would allow the Senate to vote on the Temporary Vice President instead of the E-board, if the Senate chooses not to do that.
    - Anastasia states that no, the temporary position is appointed by the E-board
  - Jen states that it seems silly that incapacitation allows for a Senate vote, but resignation does not.
    - Anastasia states that these are issues that can be worked on later on, and can be fixed in the Constitution.

- Stephanie asks if the E-board plans to announce the Temporary Vice President tonight, and if so if they would like to take a break for an Executive Session. She reminds the Senate that it takes two signatures in order to even appoint the new Interim President. She would suggest that this loophole also be fixed in the Constitution, because even though it states that GSA can function with only two officers, an officer cannot sign their own authorization employment form.
    - Anastasia and Jen agree to call for a ten-minute recess for Executive Session.
- Anastasia recalls the meeting to order and announces that the E-board has decided to call for nominations for the Temporary Vice President position, which is a one-month position to cover just until the permanent replacement election can be held at the October Senate meeting. Anastasia and Jen will make the decision together this week or next on who to select, but right now they would like to see if anyone would like to serve.
  - Peter Farruggia and Connor Walters volunteer.
    - Jen states that if anyone is uncomfortable coming forward right now that she would be more than happy to accept nominations/volunteers by email.
  - Student asks what the responsibilities of the Temporary Vice President would be.
    - Anastasia responds that the main responsibility is to assist the President with any administrative duties, but also they would review applications for club recognition, organize the officer training meetings, which she states have already been organized, be the second signer on PO's and paperwork processed to make sure that expenses are valid, and write the Senate meeting minutes.
  - Tanja states that you can always read the GSA Constitution for a list of responsibilities as well.
    - Anastasia responds that the Constitution is not very detailed. They are working on the Handbook, but that the Vice President portion is now missing.
    - Stephanie responds that Amy will be sending in that information.
- Student asks if there is going to be a conflict of interest with a staff member acting as the President since both of those positions are paid. They ask if this person will now be double paid.
  - Jen responds that there is nothing in the Constitution that states that a student cannot hold a staff position and an Executive Board position.
  - Student clarifies that his question is that the President position is a bonded position and the staff member is obviously being paid, so does that mean that the President would also be paid as a staff member.
    - Jen responds that if she does both jobs, then yes she would be paid for both positions.
  - Student asks if there is a conflict of interest with that because you would now be able to amend your own contract with the GSA.
    - Jen responds that the President does not actually write contracts for student staff, and that she doesn't actually have a contract.
      - Stephanie clarifies that no student staff members have contracts.
  - Jen states that she is not a contracted employee, she is a student employee. She was hired by the Vice President, in consideration with the other E-board members. As stated previously, the President does not make any decisions related to MDRF, and the MDRF does not make any decisions related to the President. They are two separately functioning entities.
- Anastasia states that her understanding was that Jen would resign from the MDRF Director position for the moment and that Brittany would take over for those duties.
  - Jen states that she did not say that she would resign. She said that if it got to be longer than a month or so that Brittany could take over the duties of the Director, but right now she can still fulfill both roles.
- Tanja states that there is also the question about whether Interim Officers should actually get paid or not, because it is not specified in the Constitution, so she thinks that should be up for debate. She states that there is a clause in the Handbook that encourages nobody to hold two positions, but the Handbook is not the Constitution, so she would leave that up to the Senate
  - Jen and Stephanie both clarify that the Handbook encourages no one to hold more than one staff position, not Executive Board and staff positions.
  - Anastasia states that she thinks it was written with the spirit of people not holding two positions.
    - Jen responds that it does not prohibit that situation. She states that she read everything and every policy that she could, including SBI By-Laws, because she happens to serve on that board as well, the Graduate Student Association Employee Handbook, and the Constitution. There is nothing that prohibits an E-board member from serving as a student staff member, and because she is allowed to work multiple hours she can work both jobs. She also states that because she has an Assistant that takes on a lot of the administrative stuff with MDRF, it makes her job as Director a lot easier.
- Student states that it seems like she had a lot of time to prepare for this meeting while most other people are just learning about the situation.
  - Jen responds that Tanja has been incapacitated for nearly two weeks.

- Another student states that it is posted on the GSA website, and has been posted on the website, that the E-board was going to bring this incapacity up at this Senate meeting specifically.
  - Student responds that he thought this whole thing was because of the Vice President's resignation.
    - Jen responds no, that she was willing to serve as the Interim President even when it was just Tanja who was incapacitated.
  - Student states that if we had two officers then we wouldn't need an Interim President.
    - Jen responds that while you don't have to, in her understanding if you have only two officers and they don't agree on something, then you need a tie breaker to make decisions. Or if one of them can't come in to sign paperwork, then the third person would do it.
    - Tanja states that the Constitution lists that in a tie the President makes a temporary decision, and then the Senate has to confirm that decision.
- Student asks what happens then if there is no President.
  - Anastasia responds that the Vice President would take over, or assume the role.
- Student states that this doesn't seem to be going over very smoothly and that there seems to be some conflicts going on, and back and forth going on, so she asks if it would be better if we re-did the vote, if there were other nominees.
  - Various Senators state that the vote has already taken place.
  - Anastasia states that this is possible because there is new information that was not discussed.
    - Jen states that it is not new information.
- Anastasia states that she agrees with the fact that there is no rule prohibiting this, but at the same time she knows that it was written with the spirit, because the policies were written by the E-board.
  - Tanja states that the Senate can re-vote only at the next Senate meeting according to the Constitution because at any Senate meeting you can revisit the appointment. So, if in October the Senate feel like maybe this is too much power for one person to have, then at the next Senate meeting they can propose a re-vote and decide again if you want the office to be filled, if you want an Interim, or whatever they want to do. Until then, she thinks the major, undecided question is whether Jen should get a second stipend for the Interim position.
    - Stephanie states that historically, yes, if somebody works two jobs, which has happened in the past, then they have been paid for both jobs.
  - Tanja states that her question is specifically about the Interim position.
    - Stephanie responds that yes, Interims in the past have been paid.
- Anastasia states that her question is on the spirit of the rule.
  - Tanja states that the problem is because they never received the Vice President portion of the Handbook the revisions were never finalized in order to be voted on by the Senate, so the Senate has to go with the old version that exists right now, which gives that leeway. Tanja states that this goes along with all the questions of transparency. She states that the Senate all voted already to fill this position.
- Student states that there was no option to abstain from the election vote.
  - Student responds that you could just not vote and that would count as an abstention.
- Jen asks for the Senate's attention and states that she appreciates all their concerns. She states that she was up front about her MDRF position. The beautiful thing about right now is that they are coming up on the Review Council portion of the MDRF cycle, which is something that she does not actually do, because the Review Council is a responsibility of Brittany's. Jen states that she is more than happy to give up one of her stipends if that is what would appease the Senate. She thinks the problem is that if she is expected to do two jobs then she would like to be compensated for both jobs. Because of her position and the fact that she will already be in the GSA office, she is willing to take on the duties of the President. She states that you do not have to pay her the full stipend, whatever the Senate would like to do she will do. She just wants to ease the concerns that it is a conflict of interest. It is not, as Tanja and Jen have never had to work on anything together. The MDRF fund is separate from the general GSA fund. The E-board does not make decisions on the MDRF funds, and she does not make decisions on the applications. She only works with students, as many of you know, to help strengthen their applications. There is not a conflict of interest because she is not making any decisions. She did not sign a contract, she did not build a contract with the GSA as a student, and she doesn't have any control over what she gets paid. She also doesn't have any control over how things get allocated under the GSA budget, because that is handled by Anastasia. So again, there is no decision making conflict of interest. And lastly, she does not have any unseen agendas, she is not trying to trick the Senate into giving her all of the money from the GSA. She just wants someone that is knowledgeable about the organization to help carry it until our President can come back. With that, all of the work that she has been doing is to help in the interim. She knows that she can do both of her jobs, and has no concerns about that, but if the Senate needs her to step down as the MDRF Director in the interim, then she can do that. She does not want to, because she really likes working with students, but she is willing to if necessary. She also wants to be up front and work with the Senate, and be completely open and honest. She wants the Senate to please know that she went into this knowing that Tanja was incapacitated. She feels strongly that there should be three officers at all times, just in terms of signing paperwork and helping with decision making, etc. That was why she looked into everything before the meeting. That is

why she felt that it does not state that an Executive Board member cannot hold a staff position, especially one like this where neither of them are making decisions based on the other, so that is why she wanted to be the Interim President. Again, she was upfront about her other position. She asks the Senate if there are any remaining questions.

- No questions.
- Anastasia states, again, that her understanding was that she would step down as MDRF Director.
  - Jen states again that she never said that.
  - Anastasia states that she assumed that because when she asked her about the MDRF position Jen stated that Brittany would step in if necessary.
    - Jen responds that she said that Brittany could take on some of the administrative duties if necessary.
  - Anastasia apologizes, but states that she did not think that.
  - Student states that she never thought that there was any question of Jen stepping down, and as far as she is concerned what Jen stated was perfectly clear, and she understood that she said she had an Assistant that would take over if necessary.
    - Various students agree.
    - Anastasia responds that she just wanted to state what her concern was.
- Student voices his support for Jen. He states that this is an interim position, which in and of itself is temporary.
  - Jen confirms that she does not imagine doing both jobs for the whole year. She states that if it becomes obvious that Tanja does have to step down permanently then the GSA will hold a full election. If at that time she decides that she wants to run for President, then she will step down from MDRF. Or, if she wants to stay in MDRF then she will not run for President. She does not plan to do both jobs forever.
  - Student continues that he does not think it would be right for the Senate to expect her to work two positions and not be compensated for both.
    - Anastasia states that that was never really the question. Her concern was only that she misunderstood.
  - Student continues that Jen spoke before the vote on the Interim President position and stated that if in time she could not do both positions then she would give it up, but she would make that decision at that time. Now, as she has said in her response, her positions are separate entities and do not overlap. The only thing that overlaps is her office location, which isn't even a problem. He thinks that she has spoken very eloquently about everything, she is clearly qualified, and we should not have any further concerns about her abilities.
- GSA Staff Introduction
  - Mark Diamond Research Fund (MDRF)
    - Jennifer Schechter and Brittany Kenyon ([gsa-mdrf@buffalo.edu](mailto:gsa-mdrf@buffalo.edu))
    - This is the 46<sup>th</sup> year of MDRF, which gives students money to do their final research.
    - Graduate Student Grant Amounts:
      - Doctoral: \$3,000
      - MFA: \$2,000
      - Master's: \$1,500
      - Lifetime max of \$4,500
    - Three grant cycles per year. Applications are due September 23<sup>rd</sup>, February 17<sup>th</sup>, and May 25<sup>th</sup>.
    - Workshops will be offered throughout the year.
  - Editorial Assistance
    - Veronica Wong, Jeremy Lakoff, Adam Drury, and Samantha Schichtel-Greenwood ([gsa-editorial@buffalo.edu](mailto:gsa-editorial@buffalo.edu))
    - Free copy editing service for all graduate students who pay the student activity fee
      - Submit papers online at [www.gsa.buffalo.edu](http://www.gsa.buffalo.edu)
  - Programming Coordinators
    - Courtney Doxbeck and Rishabh Bhandawat ([gsa-programming@buffalo.edu](mailto:gsa-programming@buffalo.edu))
    - Courtney explains that upcoming GSA events include
      - September 5<sup>th</sup>- Discount AMC Movie Tickets Available
        - ❖ \$6 each at the SBI Ticket Offices. 1 per UB ID.
      - September 18<sup>th</sup>- Discount Corn Maize Tickets Available
        - ❖ \$5 each at the SBI Ticket Offices. 2 per UB ID.
      - September 19<sup>th</sup>- Distinguished Speaker Series presents Malala Yousafzai, 7:30pm at Alumni Arena
        - ❖ Free tickets available at the SBI Ticket Offices September 7<sup>th</sup>.
        - ❖ Limited quantity available. 2 per UB ID.
      - September 20<sup>th</sup>- South Campus Siesta, 3:30 – 5:30pm in 105 Harriman Hall
        - ❖ Free food and beverages for graduate students at South Campus
      - September 30<sup>th</sup>- Brewery Tour and Beer Tasting, 12:00 – 2:30pm at New York Beer Project (6933 S. Transit Rd. in Lockport)
        - ❖ Tickets on sale now at the SBI Ticket Offices for \$10 each. 2 per UB ID.

- October 15<sup>th</sup>- GSA Wine Tour
    - ❖ Tickets on sale September 11<sup>th</sup> at the SBI Ticket Offices for \$20 each. 2 per UB ID.
  - Webmaster
    - Sumedh Ambokar ([gsa-webmaster@buffalo.edu](mailto:gsa-webmaster@buffalo.edu))
    - If you need help creating or updating a website, please contact the GSA.
  - Professional Staff
    - Gena Zimmerman ([gmz@buffalo.edu](mailto:gmz@buffalo.edu)) and Stephanie George ([slfrank@buffalo.edu](mailto:slfrank@buffalo.edu))
    - Gena has worked for GSA for nearly 45 years and Stephanie for 12 years.
- The UB Living Stipend movement
  - Caitlin McIntyre from English explains that she is a PhD student and a Teaching Assistant. She states that many of the Senators here are probably TAs and GAs as well. This movement is an initiative that started in her department, but they are trying to get support across campus. They have come to the conclusion that the stipends for GAs and TAs are not livable. The University website states that the annual cost of living in Buffalo is \$20,584.00 for off-campus living and \$17,891.00 for on campus living. Meanwhile, most TAs are making \$14,000.00 a year or below for work that typically exceeds the 20 hours per week that are mandated. Over the years the financial position of students' lives has reverted and caused difficulties in the timely completion of degrees, the ability to be on the academic job market, and as such is tarnishing the reputation of UB, threatening our ability to recruit the best and the brightest. The situation is also exacerbated for international students who often have to maintain a proof of income, or balance in their bank accounts for I-20 document renewal. So the University isn't even paying students enough to live here legally. Otherwise people have to rely on friends, family and other forms of support. Many departments do not have full coverage for TAs and GAs when they are accepted into the program. There is differential and non-transparent access to fellowships, and coverage is often not for a full degree program. Therefore, the students are asking the President and the Provost to raise all stipends to a livable wage, which, calculated based on the number of weeks employed, would be \$21,310.00. The English students have created the movement called the UB Living Stipend Movement, which can be found on Facebook at UBRippingUsOff, or on Twitter at #UBRippingUsOff. There is a link to a petition there, which currently has over 400 signatures from University students and faculty alike. As the numbers increase the movement is receiving more support from the teaching staff, and they hope to get the administration's attention so that they will do something to help the graduate students, who do the lion's share of the labor on campus. Please spread the word and help get as many signatures as possible so that we can start getting paid.
- Anastasia announces that the 2017-2018 Senate Meeting Schedule is attached to the back of tonight's Agenda.
- Anastasia asks all Senators to please post the GSA Services Flyers that were handed out at sign-in around the Departments where they can be seen by a majority of graduate students.
- Anastasia announces that the South Campus SBI Ticket Office has moved to 135 Diefendorf Hall.
  - Student asks what the hours of that Ticket Office are for this semester.
    - Stephanie responds that she believes they are open from approximately 10:00am to 4:00pm most days of the week, but she will ask the Ticket Office to post the official hours to their website as soon as possible.

#### 5. Report of the President

- The President's incapacity has already been discussed and voted on.

#### 6. Report of the Vice President

- Anastasia states that she would like to address any questions the Senate might have in regards to the Vice President's statement that was posted.
  - Student states that in Anastasia's response email she has the word allegations in quotes, which implied to the student that they were in fact not without foundation, but real things, that they were quote unquote allegations. She asks what Anastasia meant by putting this word in quotes, and what she was trying to imply.
    - Anastasia responds that what she actually meant was that those were allegations, what she meant is that they were claims in this regard. She wants to say that she disagrees with a lot of the points that Amy made, and she is ready to respond to any questions about the statement.
  - Student asks if Anastasia has the actual statement. Without being able to see it he doesn't think anyone had the information memorized in order to be able to ask any questions.
    - Anastasia responds that the best option would probably be for students to pull up the email on their smartphones and search Resignation of the VP.
  - Anastasia states that she would like to speak to at least one part that concerns her differently, and that is the Statistics Lab. She says that according to Amy's statement the Statistics Lab was provided while the other services were being cut. She states that this is not true and that the Statistics Lab was actually funded by an SBI grant that

GSA applied for and received. Then part of it was subsidized by the budget, however no services were cut whatsoever, and we're talking about \$3,000 there. She states that another thing is that if it was a fiscally irresponsible decision, then it is not only a claim against her, that she takes personally, but it is also against the Finance Committee, who scrutinizes every decision. If there was a question of hurting the other services, then it never would have passed. On a good note, she states that, as she promised when she suggested the running of the Statistics Lab, it has now been taken over by the University and is being provided by UB. She does not have an announcement right now, but the service is provided by the College of Arts and Sciences under an agreement, and it is paid for by the College of Arts and Sciences.

- Student comments that he is a member of the Finance Committee and he thinks that members past and present would agree with him, and back up Anastasia on this, that they literally go through everything with a fine toothed comb. There is nothing that gets passed that has not been talked about at length. There are sometimes when Finance Committee meetings last two, three, and four hours, especially when they are going over the budget. So for Amy to make those allegations and to send them out to the Senate, which he felt was highly unprofessional, she should have been at the Finance Committee meetings if she wanted to have a better understanding of where the finances were going. But, unfortunately she did not come to those meetings. He states he just wants to make this comment and that he is sure his other Finance Committee members would back him up on that. He thanks the Senate and asks that if they have any questions they email him, Anastasia, or any of the other members.
- Student states that to add to that comment, he was on the Finance Committee during this whole discussion of the Stats Lab and that they spent multiple sessions, because the issue came up over two sessions, and they scrutinized everything in order to come up with the best course of action, and whether or not to do it. Again, he states, that these concerns never came up. The committee always makes decisions with the best interests of students in mind.
- Anastasia thanks the Finance Committee members and asks if there are any other questions.
- Student asks for more detail on the sentences in the email where Amy says "I have also experienced an aggressive and harassing working environment in my previous two terms served, which has manifested medically, and that I feel persists in the existing Executive Board." He would like more information relating to this statement.
  - Anastasia responds that, first, she cannot speak on the previous terms because she was not there and it is all hearsay, and so she will only speak for her term, and she only served with Amy for one term and one year. Anastasia states that Amy has been struggling with balancing her academic work and GSA work, and the reason why she knows this is because she admitted to that repeatedly. She states that then, at some point, Amy asked Anastasia to do some of her duties. Another thing, she states, is that she filed a complaint against Anastasia for asking her literally during the application and HR process when hiring staff in the summer, Anastasia had asked Amy in a polite manner, and she can provide those emails if requested, to compile the applications as a bunch and send them to her so that she and Tanja would not have an overflow of emails. She states that this is how it had been done in the previous summer when her and Tanja had just come into office. She states that she asked for that information twice and that Tanja also asked for the information, and that in response, eventually, she received a complaint against her for micro-managing. She states that it is up to the Senate to decide whether this was harassment or not.
- Jen states that this question and answer session is really interesting because the person who wrote the statement is not here. (General consensus from various Senators in the audience). She states that we cannot necessarily ask or answer questions based on statements that Amy made in her email, because those are her statements and hers alone, and no one here can dare to speak to any of them. She feels that the Senate's questions should maybe be regarding her resignation and the process that we then have to follow. With that, she states that the Senate can ask questions about the organization as a whole, but she feels that it is really inappropriate of us to try and speak to whatever statements Amy made. She says that anyone is more than welcome to reach out to Amy and ask her directly, but that no one here has the answers to the Senate's questions but her.
- Student states that Amy chose not to be here, and that someone should have a chance to defend themselves to the Senate against these allegations.
  - Jen responds that that is fine, and she agrees, but asking questions as to what Amy meant, we do not know that information.
  - Anastasia interrupts and states that she wanted to be able to comment on things that she is able to comment on.
  - Student asks Anastasia not to speak while someone else is trying to talk.
  - Jen continues that she just wants to make sure that we don't dive into something when we might feel personally attacked, but also make sure that we are strongly supporting our Finance Committee, who is really wonderful.

- Student responds that he is now going through this, and addressing these concerns, and the email is perfectly valid information. He points out that Anastasia is chairing the meeting, although Jen has been elected Interim President.
- Anastasia responds that this was their agreement.
- Jen again states that she just wants to make sure that we are not sitting here personally attacking people, and that we are actually addressing the issues. She thinks that Amy's standpoint was coming from her accounting background, because she was a professional accountant, and that is where some of her financial opinions stemmed from, although Jen knows she didn't always attend the Finance Committee in order to address the issues. Jen states that she just wants the Senate to know Amy's approach to this, but also know that we can't answer questions based on what she meant. GSA can only reply to or respond to a lot of the Senate's concerns about what our organization may or may not be doing. She just wants to make sure that this doesn't delve into going back and forth with personal attacks.
- Anastasia thanks Jen for her comments, but wants to say that she is only responding to the facts that she has evidence for.
- Jen responds that again, it is only one sided information.
- (General discussion and argument)
- Student states that this whole thing is ridiculous and unprofessional. That if someone is going to send this type of email then they should be here to back up their statements, and to present their argument in a way that is not one sided. If this discussion is going to be productive then the arguments need to be made in a different setting. She states that in order to be productive we would need both people here to be able to give evidence. Therefore, she thinks this whole thing is a big waste of time, and she doesn't want to go through every individual claim that was made. If anyone else feels that way and we have no evidence to support the reasons behind these claims, then we should wrap this up and move on with the rest of the meeting.
  - Anastasia states that we will have just two more comments.
- Student states that in the light of trying to make things better, and she isn't sure if this is something that has been discussed in the past because this is her first meeting, Amy suggested a Human Resources audit or a Workplace Conflict Resolution. She is wondering if that is something the Senate would decide they want to do, or who would make that decision, and how they would do that.
  - Anastasia responds that she will address this questions later on, but the Workplace Conflict Resolution is something that can be recommended by the Senate or the Services Committee. The Senate can give any task to the E-board that they feel is necessary. She agrees that the Workplace Conflict Resolution is probably needed in any workplace.
- Student asks how harassment complaints are dealt with by GSA, and not necessarily in Amy's case, but in general. Who do the complaints go to and how are they recorded.
  - Anastasia responds that she honestly doesn't know.
  - Student then asks if they go to the President.
  - Tanja responds that she will not speculate as to the reasons why Amy resigned, but that in general the process is that if there is an inter-office conflict then a formal or informal complaint can be made to Vice President, because they are the officer that oversees all staff. She states that without talking about the specifics of last year, then if there is a complaint that is about the Vice President it goes either to the President, or it can also be reported with the permanent staff, from what she understands. She states that one of the things they were going to do this summer, which unfortunately did not get done, was that the Vice President was going to write up an actual complaint form and establish a procedure that would be included in the Handbook and be on the books. Also, there would be a method for complaints in case students or committee members felt harassed. That would create a procedure for how students can file a complaint without anyone having to see it. She states that there is a lot of interaction going on between graduate students and all of the GSA staff. For that there is currently no formal procedure. She states that there is always the possibility of going to Judicial Affairs, or filing a harassment complaint with EDI, which is something you can all do anyway. That is something that officers will learn about in the officer training. Those are the general processes. There was a case where we did have a Workplace Conflict Resolution meeting, and one of the things Tanja was going to do at the beginning of this year was to bring that knowledge into GSA and have a general meeting with everybody on the staff and the Executive Board to talk about some of the strategies that could help improve our work environment. GSA is like any other workplace or department where there are some people who get along better, and some people who don't get along so well. This kind of training is really great and Amy managed to find an entity in Buffalo that offered their services to us for free, so we didn't have to use any student funds to support this training. She states that the GSA can still utilize those services at any point, and so can anyone in Buffalo.

- Student comments that the original question was about the email being sent out with allegations in quotation marks. He states that Amy had a unique opportunity to be here and chair this meeting and voice these concerns in person today, but instead chose to resign. He thinks that should be considered when we are talking about the allegations.
  - Stephanie asks to make a comment and states that while she respects all of the Senate's opinions, she wants to point out that if you read Amy's email it states specifically that it is a medical issue that is preventing her from continuing in the position as much as everything else. She medically is not able to be here tonight and Stephanie asks that the Senate please keep this information in mind as well, because it is an important fact that is sort of being overlooked.

#### 7. Report of the Treasurer

- Anastasia announces that Mandatory Officer Training Meetings are held for all club Presidents and Treasurers. There will be four sessions offered on the following dates:
  - Monday, Sept. 18th at 12:00pm in 330 Student Union
  - Wednesday, Oct. 18th at 10:00am in 330 Student Union
  - Thursday, Oct. 19th at 7:00pm in 105 Harriman Hall (South Campus)
  - Friday, Oct. 20th at 4:00pm in 330 Student Union
    - This final meeting will be a shortened version of the training for returning officers only, and will require prior registration for verification purposes.
  - Student asks how officers will register for this meeting.
    - Anastasia states that we will send out a link once the Webmaster has created the online form.
- Anastasia announces a few changes to the GSA Budgetary Guidelines in regards to the Summer paperwork. She explains that our fiscal year ends on July 31<sup>st</sup> and the new one begins on August 1<sup>st</sup>. After this date we do not have access to the prior year funds anymore, and there is no flexibility with those deadlines. Because of that, the E-board, in collaboration with the permanent staff, decided that we needed to make some changes to our internal deadlines. Summer events now must take place by July 15<sup>th</sup> and all money must be spent by this date. Also, the Summer Paperwork Deadline is now August 15<sup>th</sup> (previously September 1<sup>st</sup>).
- In light of everything that has been discussed, Anastasia would like to discuss a GSA Organizational Effectiveness Study. During the summer she looked into the opportunity of bringing in a third party to look into the organizational effectiveness of GSA. First, she wants to say that we will have to discuss some budget issues today, and that we will have to make decisions on the budget again. So, she wanted to be proactive and see how we can go around the situation overall, and what changes we can make to make GSA more successful. This study would look at, overall, our organization, how we operate, and what steps can be made. It will look to see if there are any unknown liabilities that we might be facing and if we are operating, basically, as effectively as possible. Anastasia asks if there are any questions.
  - Jen asks if Anastasia has found somebody to conduct this study.
    - Anastasia responds that she spoke to the Undergraduate Student Association, to SBI, and to the SBI lawyer about the situation overall and what can be done. Such an organizational study has proved helpful for the Undergraduate Student Association. She states that, yes, she found an expert called Loomis Associates, but basically it is a person who has forty years of experience in HR issues in non-profits. That person agreed to do the service for \$350, which Anastasia states that she will pay for herself if it will help. This money would come out of miscellaneous funds because it is an operational expense, and she feels it is high time to do that study. She states that this has been discussed by the Finance Committee and reviewed thoroughly, and is her recommendation.
  - Student asks what the point of doing this study would be.
    - Anastasia responds that the point is to have someone with experience look at our organization as a whole and to see what steps can be done further for GSA to operate. The person will look at our policies, our compensation and benefits system, and whether the way the arrangement with officers and permanent staff is handled is the most efficient way. This is what the study will be about, approximately.
- Funding Account Balances:
  - Special Activity: \$18,000.00 to start, \$0.00 allocated this month, \$18,000.00 remaining
  - Interdepartmental Activity: \$2,000.00 to start, \$0.00 allocated this month, \$2,000.00 remaining
  - Symposia: \$15,000.00 to start, \$1,400.00 allocated this month, \$13,600.00 remaining
  - Scholarly Publication: \$9,000.00 to start, \$0.00 allocated this month, \$9,000.00 remaining
  - Community Outreach: \$2,000 to start, \$0.00 allocated this month, \$2,000.00 remaining
  - Conferences:
    - August: 17 requests for \$7,581.72, 17 applications approved for \$7,581.72
    - September: 7 requests for \$3,657.90, 7 applications approved for \$3,657.90
    - Beginning Balance: \$132,000.00 to start; Remaining Balance \$120,760.38

- Anastasia states that this next topic is difficult. As it turns out at the beginning of the year the GSA has a budget shortage of about \$40,000.00. That came from our carry-over, which is based on previous years, being much smaller than we expected. It also came from inaccurate enrollment figures from UB. We have approximately \$11,000.00 to offset those costs because the new accounting system that SBI was going to implement was not implemented this year. However, it will be an expense that will need to be taken into consideration next year. For now, we need to reduce our spending by \$29,000.00. She states that there is no popular decision that she sees that we can do, but she has prepared some suggestions. She presents two budget proposals for consideration, and shows them in comparison to the current year's original allocated budget. She states that the only things that can be looked at and changed are either student programs, or overhead expenses, or both. She states that there are a lot of expenses that you cannot change because they have to be paid, like accounting. In this case she has two proposals, but she does not want to in any way impose any of them at the Senate right now. It could be option A or option B, or any combination of the two. The point is that it's either student services, and we just keep cutting all the student services, or its overhead expenses. In option A she proposes cutting 10% from each of the services GSA provides, which include club allocations, group funding, and conference funding. That's all we have to cover the deficit that we have and we are facing. In Option B she presents the overhead expenses and again states that this is not an easy decision, but she wants to provide the Senate with all the options. These expenses include the regular pay and the student stipends. She states that honestly, out of the student stipends, she can only speak for the officers and one way is to just work with two officers, which would save GSA \$14,000.00, but that would not be enough to cover the whole shortage. She states that also, the Senate should bear in mind that next year we will face the same problem. She does plan to have a re-run vote during the regular election to see if the student body will agree to the fee increase, but unfortunately that is the only way that it can be done. She states, however, that she has to talk about our Office Managers and their pay, which is a fifth of the budget. She states that the \$70,000.00 number she is proposing is random and that she is not proposing firing anyone. That is not what it means.
  - Various students state that they cannot see the presented budgets and do not know what numbers she is referring to specifically.
  - Motion to recess the meeting in order to print the budgets and hand them out for review
    - Motion: Counseling, School & Education Psychology
    - Second: Political Science
    - In Favor: 16; Oppose: 28; Abstain: 7
    - Motion fails
  - Student asks if this has to be approved tonight, or if the Senate can take this information back to their clubs and get their feedback and vote next month.
    - Anastasia responds that it is totally up to the Senate to decide what to do. She adds that the Finance Committee did not have a chance to review these proposals because the information was only brought to her attention yesterday. She feels it would be a good idea for the Finance Committee to discuss these options as well.
  - Student asks if there will be any repercussions for tabling the discussion.
    - Anastasia responds that we will keep operating in the regular budget for now.
    - Stephanie adds that we are not out of money yet, because it is still the beginning of the year.
  - Student states she has a comment before Senators take stuff back to their Departments. She strongly urges everyone not to do anything to touch anything involving the Office Managers. She states that, if you haven't noticed, GSA does not run particularly smoothly, and that the Office Managers are basically running the show, and have been running the show for us for the entire time they have been here. She asks the Senate to please not touch that money. She states that she does not care if everyone has to take cuts from their club budgets, or if her club has to take a cut from their budget, she is not touching them.
    - Two other students stand up to announce that they are 100% in agreement. They state that they have been members of the Election Committee and the Finance Committee and that they have worked closely with the Office Managers. They state that they are indispensable and that it would be very irresponsible of the Senate to take away this resource.
    - Jen states that it would also be illegal because the Office Managers are permanent, contracted employees who are employed through 2020. Therefore, if the Senate is going to look at this option then they have to take that information into account, because the organization is under contractual obligation to employ them through that date.
      - Anastasia responds that we are, but she would like to add that it would not be up to the Senate to make decisions specifically on the process, and how it would be, just on the decision as to whether we are cutting student services only, or whether we are cutting overhead.
    - Student responds that the Office Managers are more than overhead and that without their input there would be no student services and the organization would be a mess.
    - Student states that he does not know how we would be able to function at all.

- Motion to table the discussion until the Finance Committee has reviewed the budget proposals and people have had time to bring the information back to their respective GSA clubs.
  - Motion: Physics
  - Second: History
  - In Favor: 46; Oppose: 0; Abstain: 4
  - Motion passes
- Jen states that it is also important to note that these are not the only two proposals, nor are they set in stone. If the Finance Committee goes back and comes up with another proposal, or if Senators go back to their Departments and look over the budget and come up with any other proposals, those are things that can be brought to light. She doesn't want everyone to think that the Finance Committee is only going to consider these two ideas. These can be changed if anyone has a better idea.
  - Anastasia reiterates that it is not just either one or the other, it could be a combination. These are just what we actually can change and we all have to think about that.
- Student asks if these proposals can be sent around to the Senators by email.
  - Anastasia responds that it could be, but not to take it as it is.
  - Jen states that our current, approved budget is also posted on the GSA website for everyone to review.
- Jen asks Anastasia to clarify that we only need to cut \$29,000.00.
  - Anastasia states that this is correct.
- Student asks what the \$4.00 student fee increase would have done towards the \$29,000.00 if it had passed last year.
  - Anastasia responds that she does not have the actual figures with her right now, but that a \$4.00 increase might not have done anything.
- Student states that \$4.00 per student would have given us approximately \$28,000.00 extra.
  - Anastasia responds yes, but that next year we will face the same problem and we have to think long-term.
  - Stephanie clarifies that the increase would not necessarily have fixed the fact that we came up short on carry-over, but it would have increased the amount of revenue coming in for this year.
- Tanja asks Stephanie to explain what carry-over means to the Senate.
  - Stephanie responds that carry-over money is anything that was allocated out of last year's budget that did not get spent, or anything that is left in reserves, for which we have nothing left because in the previous year the reserves were drained in order to balance this past year's budget. Therefore, we now only have whatever revenue is received from student activity fees, or anything that does not get spent out of the budget.
    - Anastasia clarifies that the reserve line was listed as a separate line in the budget in addition to the carry-over.
    - Stephanie responds that when that money was transferred out of the reserve account it then gets added to the Appropriated Net Assets line, which is the carry-over amount, and the amount that came in was about \$35,000.00 less than anticipated.
    - Gena states that the budget was based on \$200,000.00 in Appropriated Net Assets and that we actually only have a little over \$166,000.00 in Appropriated Net Assets.
- Student asks if it would be possible to re-run the vote for the fee increase.
  - Anastasia responds that this is only possible during the general election in April. She states that we do not have to run the referendum, but we do have the option to ask the student body whether they would agree to raise the fee.
- Student asks, to be clear, that we could theoretically run a referendum vote.
  - Anastasia responds that a referendum vote is basically to ask whether the fee should be mandatory or voluntary, and this is why it is required. She states that we would only have to re-run the part about the fee increase.
  - Stephanie states that it has to be part of a general election.
- Student asks whether or not we are doing a general election next month for the Vice President.
  - Anastasia responds that the election is not considered a general election. She states that the Constitution says that general elections only take place in the Spring semester, explicitly.
- Student asks if the election would be considered a Special Election.
  - Anastasia responds that it is a Senate election for this procedure. The Vice President permanent replacement will be elected by the Senators only.

#### 8. Old Business

- No Old Business

#### 9. New Business

- Call for Committee Members
  - Finance Committee (9 Members, 2 Alternates)

- Anastasia announces that 5 Members are staying on from last year, and that the Call for Volunteers was sent out via email and on the GSA website last week. All the vacancies have now been filled.
      - Caelen Clark (Biomaterials)
      - Marc Schilder (Mathematics)
      - Jeremy Baron (Physics)
      - Peter Farruggia (Community Health & Health Behavior)
      - David Brown (Comparative Literature)
      - Jasmina Tacheva (Management)
      - Abdullah Alshehri (Learning & Instruction)
      - Abisha Vijayashanthar (Public Health)
      - Chethana Suresh Naik (Industrial & Systems Engineering)
      - Alt 1. Behzad Zahiri (Management)
      - Alt 2. Ladan Golshanara (Computer Science Engineering)
    - Motion to approve the Finance Committee members
      - Motion: Transnational Studies
      - Second: Linguistics
      - In Favor: 49; Oppose: 0; Abstain: 1
      - Motion passes
- Student asks if there is a possibility of making a motion for a Special Election of the general graduate student body.
  - Anastasia responds that it would not be possible because it would require a change in the Constitution. It would have to be read at the next meeting and then voted on at the meeting after that.
  - Student states that this is something they may want to consider looking into for the future.
- Jen asks if the Senate is allowed to vote to go against the Constitution should a special case arise. She states that she knows it has happened in the past. She also states that the Senate has ultimate authority in all GSA matters.
  - Student responds that he would make a motion for a general election if that would allow the students to vote on the fee increase issue. Another student states that they would second that motion.
    - Anastasia responds that she doesn't know of the cases where that happened.
    - Gena states that we would have to look back into our records to see what the circumstances were related to, because it has been quite a while.
    - Anastasia responds that while the Senate has the final authority, she thinks the Constitution is written in a way so that it doesn't change.
  - Student asks if the Constitution outlines the procedure for what we are going through today.
    - Anastasia responds that we do have a specific procedure outlined in the Constitution, so she doesn't see why we would have a Constitution if you can amend it so easily.
  - Jen states that she does not want to amend the Constitution, but to choose not to follow it.
    - Student states that the Senate of our country can decide to suspend the rules of the assembly, but that they cannot suspend the Constitution.
  - Jen responds that she is not suggesting suspending the Constitution.
    - (General discussion and argument)
  - Anastasia recalls the Senate's attention to the business at hand.
- Election Committee (5 Members, including Chair)
  - Anastasia announces that the Call for Volunteers was sent out via email and on the GSA website last week and three vacancies have been filled so far.
    - Aya Ali (Biomaterials)
    - Misol Kwan (Nursing)
    - Genevieve Franck (Linguistics)
  - Anastasia states that the approval of the Election Committee members will take place at next month's Senate meeting so that we can seek out additional volunteers and the Committee has time to elect a Chair amongst themselves. If anyone else would like to volunteer, please contact the GSA.
    - Stephanie states that we need a minimum of 5 members, but we can have more if additional people are interested, as long as we have an odd number of representatives.
  - The Election Code will be revised and reviewed for approval at the November Senate Meeting.
- Club Recognition
  - No club recognition applications received.
- Funding Requests
  - Shweta from Chemical & Biological Engineering is asked to give a brief description of her club's symposium.
    - There are no questions from the Senate.

### Symposium

- CBE Research Symposium- Chemical & Biological Engineering
  - Requested/Recommended: \$1,400.00
- Motion approve the Symposium request at the recommended amount
  - Motion: Political Science
  - Second: Community Health & Health Behavior
  - In favor: 40; Oppose: 7; Abstain: 5
  - Motion passes

### 10. Roll Call and Adjournment

- Stephanie reminds everyone 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 8:30pm
  - Motion: History
  - Second: Library & Information Studies
  - In favor: 45; Oppose: 4; Abstain: 0
  - Motion passes