

**The 2nd regular meeting of the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) of the 2020-2021 Academic Year** at the University of Massachusetts Amherst was held on Wednesday, 30 September 2020 at 2:00pm, online via the Zoom videoconferencing platform, the President being in the chair, and all other staff and officers being present. Out of the 74 elected senators, 28 senators were present. By the guidelines listed in the GSS Constitution, a quorum was present.

**The President then explained the new format of running the meetings on Zoom and how Senators can change their name**.

**The President then introduced officers, staff, and executive committee members.**

**The President then asked if there were any representatives from the GEO to make any announcements.** None were made.

**The President then asked if any Faculty Senate representatives had any announcements.** None were present at the time of this inquiry.

**The President then asked if there were any representatives from the SGA there to make any announcements.** None were present at the time of this inquiry.

**The President then asked if Student Trustee Scalona had any announcements.** Trustee Scalona announced that he will be meeting with various constituents in the coming weeks and past Trustees to learn more about the role.

**The President then asked if there were any Senators who needed to make any announcements.** No Senators indicated that they needed to make announcements. Senator Feraud-King made an announcement about GEO Wellness benefits.

**The President then asked if there were any graduate students who needed to make any announcements.**

**The President then asked if there were any announcements from the GSS staff.** No staff members indicated they had any announcements to make.

**The President then asked if there were any announcements from the GSS officers.** No officers indicated they had any announcements to make.

**The President then moved onto Agenda item A: Senator Onboarding Presentation.** The President presented about the structure, function, and position of GSS within the UMass Amherst campus and UMass system. The President also presented on Senator responsibilities, duties, and their role within the GSS structure. The President then explained the standing and *ad hoc* committees within the GSS, their roles, and membership. The President invited Senators Feraud-King and Dunlea to add any comments regarding their roles as Executive Committee members. The President then presented information about conducting Senate business.

**The President started a discussion about the pros and cons of recording Senate meetings.** Senator Feraud-King voiced that she was against recording, due to the sensitive nature of certain discussions, not just at the time of the Senate meetings, but how the information may become more sensitive at other points in time. Senator Dunlea also voiced that doxing is an issue, and that the Senate as a whole should keep this in mind. Senator Hughes added that she agrees with Senators Feraud-King and Dunlea. And suggested that the Faculty Senate’s model could be used as a precedent - i.e. only for the purposes of minutes, and specific quotes and such anonymized. Legal Counsel Manzanares added that once the video is created, it cannot be kept completely anonymous. Once the video is created, it is bound by legal laws and requests and is a part of the public record. Senator Gordon voiced that there are more negatives than positives by recording and that it may contribute to more issues than problems it solves. Senator Henrique – the graduate assistant for the Faculty Senate – voiced that he is on the fence about recording and that there are cons to long meeting notes and that hard times may prohibit some people from regularly attending Zoom meetings. Several comments were added to the chat indicating that recording meetings may discourage live participation and attendance. Senator Edelstien added via the chat that notes with sufficient details and sufficient accessibility (e.g. use of headers) would be sufficient. Senator Kamieneski added via chat that having Senate meeting notes available sooner on the website would be beneficial. Senator Feraud-King also added that Senators can/should attend officer and staff drop-in office hours, especially Senators who miss meetings can get caught up through this route.

**The President then presented Agenda item B: elections.** Senator Dunlea nominated Senator Feraud-King who also self-nominated. Senator Feraud-King nominated Senator Dunlea. No other nominations were made. The President then called for a vote by acclamation that Senator Dunlea and Senator Feraud-King be elected to the Executive Committee for AY2020-21. Senator Henrique motioned for a vote and Senator Cousins seconded. The motion passed with nineteen ayes, one abstention. Senators Dunlea and Feraud-King were elected to the Executive Committee. Treasurer Hancock then gave a brief overview of the workload and tasks of the Finance Committee. Senator Smith had a question for Senator Walsh about Finance Committee responsibilities. Senator Walsh, Senator Hamilton, and Senator Henrique then self-nominated to be on the FC. Senator Feraud-King motioned to elect. Senator Cousins seconded. The motion passed with 23 ayes and no abstentions. The President then added a Google form link to the chat regarding volunteer committee seats that Senators could sign-up for. The President then listed the specific committee options with the help of Senators Feraud-King and Dunlea and Treasurer Hancock.

**The President then presented Agenda item C: GSS Priorities for the semester.** At 2:50 attendees went into breakout rooms to discuss GSS priorities for the semester. After breakout rooms, Senator Neal from 1 brought up childcare. Senator Wiebe brought up supporting international students moving forward. Senator Henrique brought up the need to focus on mental health and wellness for grads. Senator Gordon brought up voting and voting awareness. Senator Edwards brought up that students of color are not being supported – both graduate and undergraduate. This includes financial, housing security, and food security. Senator Chakraborty brought up that international students who aren’t here and don’t have assistantships cannot be represented by GEO. Senator Chakraborty brought up confusion and lack of ownership among some departments and larger administration entities about who makes the final decision on some issues or what broad policies are. Senator Tillinghast brought up a need to have increased flexibility around meeting milestone extensions and having advocates within departments. Senator Edwards brought up the need for individualized development plans at the department level, and not up to a single advocate who may not accurately represent or understand diverse needs of students. Senator Feraud-King added that this is one reason why GSS is so important. It is not small change for one or two people, but universal change that so many students need. Senator Gonzalez brought up that many of these priority areas are intricately tied together and it is systemic change that needs to happen. There needs to be more communication and transparency about planning in relation to graduate students. It appears to many that graduate students are only being considered in relation to how we provide for the University. Racial justice and international student support during COVID times is vital. Senator Kuzio brought up transparency around food security and concerns around if grad students can access dining halls. Senator Kuzio also brought up that wellness events often aren’t accessible to people in other time zones. Another point of conversation was funding and how it depends on students ability to be on campus or not. Senator Furlanetto brought up childcare and furloughs. Furloughs are pushing away people who have the least power and are considered dispensable. Another theme was housing rights. Legal Counsel Manzaneres added that SLSO will be putting on a housing rights & lease 101 workshop soon. Senator Furlanetto also added that increased awareness of the student body around legal services would be good. Senator Claypool added prioritizing the food pantry, food security, and international student support. Senator Feraud-King brought up mobilizing the GSS body more and how these priority areas intersect. Legal Counsel Manzanares asked about next steps; where do these ideas go and how will GSS utilize this information? The President suggested one option as pushing priority issues to internal committees. Senator Feraud-King suggested bringing these issues back to Working Groups for spring planning and Senators bringing these topics back to home colleges and departments. Senator Henrique asked if the meeting was being recorded for note taking reasons. The President responded no, since any record once created is part of the public sphere.

**The meeting adjourned at 3:28pm.**