



Graduate Representative Organization

GC Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: 18:00 September 13th, 2021

Meeting Location: [Online, Zoom](#)

- I. Call to Order and Agenda Review
 - A. Ona Ambrozaite (Co-Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM

- II. Approval of minutes from April 26th, 2021
 - A. Conor Bean *IN TEXT* Move to approve the minutes
 1. Dani Bautista (Co-Advocacy Chair), Tom McCoy (CogSci), Vishal Yadav (Diversity Chair), and Rashi Sultania (Social Chair) *IN TEXT* second
 2. Yea: 23 Nay: 0 Abstain: 0
 3. The motion passes

- III. E-board Report (Ona & Alex)
 - A. GRO-GSA-TRU COVID-19 advocacy for graduate students: summary of summer activities & COVID-19 Town Hall Survey
Ona (Co-Chair) summarized the meetings throughout the summer:
 1. Helped draft the COVID-19 Townhall survey.
 - a) Survey distributed in July 9th. Among 740 responses, 115 from KSAS and 166 from WSE.
 - b) Results:
 - (1) Finance situation changed in scale from 0 (unsatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied): KSAS: 4.06, WSE: 4.09
 - (2) Types of additional funding: KSAS: one-time relief payments; some responders indicated fellowships from non-profits; WSE: one-time relief payments
 - (3) 35% KSAS and 75% WSE responders do not realize the recent change in the eligibility to this fellowship
 - (4) Rate application process in scale from 0 (unsatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied): KSAS: 5.71; WSE: 2
 - (5) Reasons for not qualifying: fully funded, not close enough to graduation, have not advanced to candidacy, master students, and new international students.
 - (6) Overall feeling about plans for the Fall Semester in scale from 0 (unsatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied): KSAS: 6.12; WSE: 6.49

(7) Factor in general improve the impression of 6): mandatory vaccination for students, faculties, and staffs.

2. COVID-19 research relief funding
 - a) Most respondents are not aware of either this opportunities or their eligibility.
 - b) Ph.D. students applied for this funding are expected to receive \$5,000 to \$12,000, however, the Office of Provost advertised travel awards valued at an average of \$5,000. Students completed the survey on average asked for \$3,250, but only received \$2,000.
 - c) Reasons for not having full amount requested are not easily accessible selection criteria.
 - d) The administration has not provided a means for graduate students to appeal the award decisions or to re-apply for funding after reviewing the requirements from the final award letter.
3. Discussion about the above two issues:

Jo (English): *IN TEXT* Have we received any response to the concerns over the adjudication of research/travel funding?

Jo (English): second question, What does the discrepancy rising from concerns possibly be attributed to?

Ona: For the first question, GRO is working with GSA to get information from the Administration, and to advocate for extension of COVID-19 relief funding. For the second one, GRO and GSA can look into the discrepancy revealed by the survey reports.

Amoh: What are GRO planning to do with these information? Will this fund include international students?

Ona: Definitely advocate for the extension of these awards. The fund is for students beyond candidacy.

Conor (Politics): During the summer, master students may have \$1,000 education refund from the school. Propose to affirm GRO's position on funding issues.

Alex (Co-Chair): GRO stands in ensuring that all graduate students receive the COVID-19 relief funding and the extension.
4. Conor and Jo: *IN TEXT* **Motion: the GRO's official position on COVID relief is that all grad students with time limited funding receive a 1-year extension, with health care and stipend**
 - a) Veronica Wallace (EHE) and Emalie McMahon (CogSci) *IN TEXT* second
 - b) Yea: 23 Nay: 0 Abstain: 0
 - c) The motion passes

B. GRE-exit Updates

1. Ona: Currently, no GRE requirement for WSE student for the incoming cycle. Master students are still required to take it, but can be waived under certain circumstances. GRE is already optional for the majority of the departments in KSAS. However, GRE scores are still a big factor for US News Ranking for WSE. It is unlikely to entirely eliminate GRE. KSAS is not bounded with GRE as tight as WSE. In general, departments have the decision regarding GRE. For Ph.D. students, it is more relaxed.
2. Discussion:

Amoh: Are departments ready to bring it back?

Ona: GRO is pushing GRE to be no longer required. We have talked with Christine Kavanagh, but whether the GRE will be brought back is still unclear.

Calvin: *IN TEXT* If a possible candidate is exempted from the GRE exam due to extenuating circumstances, how will they be compared to a candidate that has taken the exam? What admission rubric are they using?

Ona: It will be more applicable if the GRE is required again. We will discuss this with the administrators.

Joseph Choy (Graduate Involvement): Do we have an official stance of the GRO-Exit from last year, or is that still yet to be decided.

Ona: GRO has sent a letter to the Homewood Graduate Board about the GRE. GRO has been fighting for GRE-Exit at least for a couple of years.

Bill Sun (AMS): Will GRE get back in place once the COVID is over?

Ona: It is unclear whether it will go back to what it was before. We hope we can make GRE-Exit to be permanent.

C. Vivian Thomas Scholars Initiative

1. Alex introduces this initiative: This Vivian Thomas Scholars Initiative aims to launch orders and to address the underrepresentation of minorities in the STEM fields. It will provide 100 new spots for Ph.D. students in 30 STEM programs, each spot contains 6 years of full coaching support, stipend, health insurance, and other benefits.

2. Discussion:

Calvin (Chemistry): Sixth year of full tuition report is quite a deviation from standard Hopkins practice. I'm just curious. I think it's encouraging. But how are they justifying offering a six year in these conditions while still claiming that five years of funding is the standard for other time limited students.

Alex: We will follow up the next GC meeting with why they're going to secure disclosure.

Cavin: I would encourage you to follow up with kind of the exact opposite question, which is why they aren't extending six years elsewhere.

Conor: Really like this idea of six years. Curious about the funding sources. And wonder how they are thinking of making more funds available beyond this as a general practice of the university.

D. Return to Campus Updates

1. Alex: We have a very high vaccination ratio on campus. A couple of weeks ago, the school only allows FDA approved vaccines to be accepted through the vaccination management system, which means international students vaccinated before have to revaccinated. Also, by comparing with partner institutions, JHU found students are still eating and drinking without masking and there is transmission of the Delta variant, which will be a major concern for the school. It is not an official stance, but we are hoping to have grab-and-go style events around campus. However, JHU is strictly prohibiting eating and drinking events on campus. Also JHU stops travel grants applications, but still allows students to travel for presenting research and attending conferences. The travel requests need to be approved by Christine for WSE and Renee for KSAS.

2. Discussion:

Christina (Biology): No clear rules for safety events on campus.

Alex: The school starts to take account of Delta variant, and that is a part of reasons why there is no official statements. We will follow up as soon as the official rules are updated.

Vittorio: They have been changing rules day to day, and being more and more restrictive, according my event-planning experience during the summer.

Jo: *IN TEXT* encourage everyone to check the policy about events

Bill: I saw lots of students eating and drinking in the library. Does the policy not apply to the library?

Alex: There is inconsistency between reality and policy.

Jo: *IN TEXT* Hopkins has been pretty consistent that food cannot be provided at events unless it's "grab and go" <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/community-living/scheduling-event-services/schedule-a-space/covidguidelines/>. Everything is here.

E. KSAS Stipend Review

1. Alex: There is an interest among KSAS students to have more regular and fixed rules on how stipends are currently in KSAS. There is no written rules on how often for this review. We will have a meeting with Mariam about helping preparing an initial written rules for stipend review. The review is different from department to department.

2. Discussion:

Calvin: Are these stipend review subject to time or cost of living and more tangible things.

Alex: Each department has their own rules. Not all the same across department. And there is no firm rules on that.

Conor: There was repeated requests from the dean's office of KSAS asked for information about how many grad students they have currently funded through a pandemic. I guess that based off of how satisfied they were with the information they got back from individual departments, they now have centralized information about how grad students are compensated at. Dean Mary mentioned in the public townhall that this review is going to cause a positive change in the current funding levels. Their goal before is to keep similar stipend level for 5 to 6 years. This review was led by a student from the School of Medicine, Alex Perez, because his program in the School of Medicine are matching their stipends with KSAS. If it move in pace as expected, the pressure will build on other school.

Jo: *IN TEXT* <https://twitter.com/SafetyWorkHSTM/status/1428482193106604038>. Here is a succinct presentation of research that Alex Parry (history of medicine) has done comparing JHU to it's self-designated "peer institutions"

Jo: I see no reason to buy the idea that choosing between these two options is a position that we need to take.

Alex: I disagree because we would like to push for a leveling. Respond to Calvin, we could add a survey to see how our students are looking for the stipend increase to come.

F. Social Events Being Planned

1. Alex: Rashi and Thomas hosted weekly trivia during the summer. Vittorio hosted many fun welcoming events for incoming students this year. Co-chairs pre-recorded orientation to replace the usual annual speech.

G. Update on GRO Lounge and Office Repair Work

1. Alex: Painted the GRO office walls and replaced the carpet with linoleum flooring. Bottom cabinets in the GRO lounge have mold. Therefore the access to the lounge is restricted due to health reasons.

H. GRO Recent Spending

1. Alex: Present the list of expenses.
2. Isaiah Chen (Treasurer): We were able to receive most of what we have requested. We requested about \$110,000, and received \$90,000 (numbers are approximated).

Main Budget (student programming)	Amazon Purchase – yoga items	\$ 1,149.50
	Dennis Drenner Photographs	\$ 2,400.00
	Amazon Purchase – movie night items	\$ 1,424.25
Main Budget (office)	Amazon Purchase	\$ 732.96
Orientation	Charm City Trivia	\$ 350.00
	Amazon Purchase – Visors	\$ 36.00
	Amazon – Casino night prizes	\$ 551.33
	Staples – event supplies	\$ 63.98
	Show Biz Productions LLC	\$ 1,250.00

IV. Discussion: COVID-19 Concerns Chair position change to COVID-19 Concerns Coordinator

- A. Alex: While COVID-19 is still active we doubted whether or not being material that has been coming out from the school was enough for the coordinator or for the COVID-19 Chair position to maintain their full hours.

Maya: I was the COVID Chair last year, and I am opposed to it based on experience last year. For last year, the position is described as no longer 25 hr/year. I logged 62 hr, but may actually spent 80-100 hrs. I also think it would be beneficial to have a position in the E-Board.

Jo: 1. The chair position and coordinator positions are different according to GRO by-laws. 2. The fact that we still have about 150,000 cases a day in the U.S., with the possibility of being worse due to the Delta variant. The COVID concerns chair was a position that was not just about safety, but was also about delight graduate students delays, questions of funding, and also a proactive role in seeking out concerns from the members of the GRO, all KSAS students and all of WSE students. I urge the GRO to reject the change for this position from a chair to a coordinator.

Tatsat: I think whether the position remains or not, it deserves more respect. Second, there is big difference from last year to this year – less townhalls, no more lockdown, more transparent. Student can access to information in a timely manner.

Joseph: Reiterate comments in the chat box from Maya *IN TEXT* We still have a travel ban, and many archives are now closed, furthermore, the covid-19 concerns chair was by far the most supported floating chair position voted on last spring. And we were out of lockdown and lab work had resumed by the start of the 2020-2021 academic year.

Conor: I think this position is important for the previous year. I wonder if GC would be willing to have one more advertisement of the position send to all graduate students.

Jo: *IN TEXT* Arguably we were in a much more favorable position with regards to covid when that vote happened compared to now.

Tatsat: *IN TEXT* At that time, vaccination was a big mess.

Veronica: *IN TEXT* We still have regularly changing guidance --with confusion that we have discussed in this meeting— and continuing issues that we've discussed during this meeting such as financial and funding issues that will continue well through this year. The issues may change, but they will persist. Seems to warrant an on-going chair position.

- B. Jo: *IN TEXT* Motion: the GRO rejects changing the chair position to a coordinator position.
1. Joseph Choy: *IN TEXT* Seconded
 2. Yea: 21 Nay: 0 Abstain: 2
 3. The motion passes

- C. Conor: *IN TEXT* Motion: one more advertisement of this position to grad students.
 - 1. Dani Bautista (Co-Advocacy Chair) and Veronica Wallace: *IN TEXT* Seconded
 - 2. Yea: 23 Nay: 0 Abstain: 0
 - 3. The motion passes

- V. Discussion: Creation of E-Sports Coordinator Position for 2021-2022 Year
 - A. Vittorio: We run E-Sports League for two semesters plus a summer so far. The Spring was the biggest we had – we engaged 175 students, five days a week for eight weeks in a row. It is high engagement and low cost. We also create the community by talking about great job tournament together. It is a good social activity in the quarantine time.
 - B. Matthew Morgado (Philosophy): Motion: to create E-Sports Coordinator position and give E-board the authority to appoint one.
 - 1. Tatsat Banerjee and Meghana Madhyastha (Computer Science): *IN TEXT* Seconded
 - 2. Yea: 21 Nay: 0 Abstain: 2
 - 3. The motion passes

- VI. GRO E-Board Elections
 - A. Permanent Positions
 - 1. Social Chair
 - a) Position Description:
 - (1) Be responsible for the encouragement of interdepartmental community through the coordination of all aspects of the GRO's social programming. This includes, but is not restricted to, an Orientation BBQ, Coffee Hours, and Happy Hours.
 - (2) Be responsible for and properly manage the GROs budget for these social events.
 - (3) Be paid for no more than 250 hours per academic year per Social Chair.
 - b) Nominees:
 - (1) Vinay Mahajan
 - (2) KeFan Zhuo
 - (3) Soumya Kumar
 - (4) Amoh Tontoh
 - c) Result of the election:
 - (1) Vinay Mahajan were elected as the Social Chair.
 - B. Floating Positions
 - 1. Health & Wellness Chair: discontinued due to loss of quorum.

- VII. Open Discussion & Questions
 - A. Discussion about private police force will be discussed next time

- VIII. Adjournment at
 - A. Ona announces the adjournment of the meeting at 8:58 pm.