

GSA Senate Meeting  
Feb 23 2023 @ 5pm – 7pm

Location: Baker 254

Zoom:

<https://syracuseuniversity.zoom.us/j/92966471078?pwd=KzNINGJmZ21uT0YzV3BHaJlVQzBCdz09>

Meeting ID: 929 6647 1078

Passcode: 318165



## Agenda

1. Welcome - Emme
2. Roll Call - Makayla
  - a. Apologies & Proxies
  - b. Quorum
3. Previous Minutes – Makayla
4. New Business – Dean V. Luzadis
  - a. GA/RA support
    - i. How does one qualify for assistantship?
      1. Dean: Most departments have individual guidelines about allocating assistantships. Institutionally, priority is to offer assistantships to PhD > MS > MPS. Final decisions made by Dept Chair and Graduate Coordinator.
      2. If there is an issue with communication, ask the grad coordinator or dept chair. If not satisfactory, bring it to Dean L. Dean can also ask on students behalf if they are nervous to approach faculty directly.
      3. Difference in RA and GA funding:
        - a. RA's support is written into grant being applied for by faculty member. The student is offered stipend and tuition waiver through that grant.
    - ii. What systems exists to help grad students transition into GA/RA roles?
      1. Dean: trying to create a system where all assistantships happen the same way.
    - iii. Differences between research foundation and state funded assistantships, particularly with insurance.
      1. Can there be overlap in insurance coverage when switching between GA/RA?
        - a. Dean L: wants to address gap, believes it is unacceptable. Does not have an answer at the moment.
    - iv. Structured and continued support for GAs?
      1. Dean L: have been talking about increasing stipends. Creating a streamlined and seamless system. Stipends extend to coverage of tuition and fees.
        - a. Needs to determine funding source to allow for change. Big part of the conversation.
          - i. Has been looking at the college foundation that are endowment funds intended for departments – determined

some of the funds were not being expended by the departments. Part of the reason they come in different sizes and split between multiple different donor desires. Dean is looking at how to package these sources together and better utilize funds. Will be meeting next week with Foundation director to discuss issue. Will not be a short-term issue.

2. GSA exploring this issue further with Academic Governance
- v. Moving fees deadline and issues in timely receipt of stipends
  1. Is there a way to extend deadline for students experiencing financial issues or delayed receipt of funding:
    - a. Dean L: they changed the deadline date: October for Fall.
      - i. Has not been changed for Spring semester, was supposed to be moved to March.
      - ii. Contact Grad Office and they work with the Bursar to potentially extend personal deadlines and remove late fees.
    2. Late payment of stipends
      - a. Dean: Funds not moving out of research office to graduate office to establish timely payment. Research office sets aside money for people to pay them for time in between start of semester and when contracts are finalized. Issues in the Research Office stemming from new Research Office staff causing delays in processing.
      - b. Dean: If you were appointed as GA late: some departments are “extraordinarily slow” at assigning GA appointments.
    3. Dean L: Grad school working to make a single server to see billing and other related issues to be able to quickly address financial issues.
  - b. TA shortage
    - i. Implications of grad student TA workloads?
      1. Not Addressed
    - ii. Problem: Faculty reporting issues getting TA's, their units did not receive any. Not enough to go around
    - iii. Is this more systemic and what are the implications moving forward?
      1. Dean L: without knowing the dept can't be specific. Has not seen anything going out, was unaware of the problem, reports that no one has requested more TA's this semester.
      2. Background:
        - a. Funds from SUNY Central support GA funding, has not changed in many years. Over the years as rates have gone up, the college has put in additional funds to support GA allocations. The number of GA's determined based on number needed to support enough PhD students for school to meet Carnegie classification. The number of GA's was reaching the minimum threshold and school decided to reward departments funding for PhD students based on research output. As a result, certain departments did not have enough GA for their courses. The algorithm was then adjusted to

remedy the issue. Foundation for allocation now also includes teaching needs, especially service course teaching needs (e.g. teaching lab courses).

- b. Since COVID, there has been an increase in the number of first year students needing to take courses with high TA-need that would usually be offset by AP or transfer credits.
- c. When the stipend change happened, the total number of GA's was reduced. The number of GA's has been static since then.
- d. TA need determined at the department level.
- e. Debate among upper faculty around should the allocation of resources for GA be rewarded on basis of departments success in recruitment and graduation or on teaching need.
- f. Dept have certain number of GA but cannot find students to fill the role. Dean has been encouraging Dept to look beyond Dept for student recruitment pool.
- g. Constantly dynamic set number of individuals. Set number of GA positions, but people in roles change at higher frequency due to switching assignments.

c. Onboarding of GAs and Ras

i. Support for onboarding:

1. Dean: Current onboarding is limited. Would like to be able to fill it out. Would like our input to identify what topics should be added.
2. Dean does not hear from Student Experience Committee of Academic Governance who typically receives this input.
3. Using the Dean's Council can help gain student insight to better address the issue.

d. Dean L.: The graduate school is staffed by ~3 full time people, most of whom have other roles outside of the office. Support for graduate students is all conducted through these two people. Dean thinks this is an issue and wants the grad experience bolstered which requires more faculty in the Grad School.

i. Does this reflect ESF's trend of not supporting graduate students?

1. Dean L.: None of the systems have changed since transition of ESF from 'having Graduate Studies' to being a 'Graduate School'. We could have a robust graduate school with more resources provided to the office. "Absolutely within the possibilities of what we can do." First thing we need is to make President and Provost to say 'yes'.
  - a. Can use GSA's help to further push the upper faculty to continue reinforcing Graduate School. Dean L. would love to continue this conversation.

5. Recap/Old Business

a. Welcome TG

i. Leah: "It's tomorrow."

ii. Offering:

1. Live music
2. drink system (relaxing on this a bit).
  - a. 55 drink tickets. Some for band. 20 people have RSVP'ed – they are the only ones receiving drinks.

- iii. Need people to help check-in.
      - 1. Jack, Jordan J., and possibly Makayla.
    - iv. Expecting ~ 40 people.
  - b. CNY Conference on Environmental Science & Studies – Emme
    - i. Fully-funded
    - ii. Still missing abstracts and applications
    - iii. 24 registrants – 12 are presenting (2 from outside ESF and SU)
      - 1. We need a maximum of 38 people to present based on current seven sessions and time allotments. Absolute minimum based on funding is 20 presenters.
      - 2. Continue encouraging peers and colleagues to submit abstracts.
    - iv. Planning committee will decide to eliminate fees altogether.
    - v. Outreach:
      - 1. GSO will be distributing information on SU
      - 2. MOSA has been shoaring with undergraduate groups
    - vi. Welcome reception has been finalized. Located at Salt City Bar, will provide outside catering. Only for the people registered for the conference. Want to have Grad and Undergrad students in the same space discussing research and potentially build support for undergraduate research mentoring.
  - c. Communications – Resolution
    - i. Mike and Jordan J. reviewed the documents, both approved.
    - ii. Emme added section addressing need for resolving internal communications and system changes, that graduate students are included all stakeholders on upgrading and functioning of technology, improvements to student experience via streamlining communication, streamlining conveyance of policies on communication methodologies (e.g., which emails to use).
      - 1. Jordan E.: Can make it two resolutions to try to split their focus and separate the more difficult changes that may be more time-intensive, versus the simpler changes likely to approved that can be finished quickly?
        - a. Emme uncertain that it will change the Schools’ opinion on the resolution as a whole.
      - 2. Shumaila: Needs to be better awareness by Communications Office on who the relevant audience is to receive certain emails.
    - iii. Authorship: Emme is the author, other members can be considered co-sponsors/coauthors. Co-sponsors can be non-members of the senate.
      - 1. Joanie Mahoney was interested in being a co-sponsor.
    - iv. Requires motion to approve with hand vote, needs majority to resolve.
    - v. Will vote on the resolution next meeting (March 9<sup>th</sup>).
  - d. Filling senate rolls for Fall '23 – Shumaila
    - i. No response from interested parties told to read the application.
    - ii. Shumaila updated the by-laws to make them easier to read.
      - 1. Shu and Emme both propose future changes to bylaws to address the number of senate seats and positions. Isolate what are the necessary roles.
    - iii. Emme spoke to Silas about the benefits of being a student government leader. “There are none.” – Emme
      - 1. Student involvement has been low in both groups.

2. Rethink the tangible benefits of being in student government to further incentivize recruitment (e.g., increased stipend, credit, etc.)
      - iv. Shumaila suggests doing a student survey to determine people's perception of student government and why they may or may not want to join.
    - e. Midday Mellow
      - i. Not happening.
  6. Any Other Business
    - a. Help Syria (OIE) – Jordan
      - i. OIE has reached out to GSA to help support initiatives to raise support for disaster relief victim. GSA can contribute to ongoing events through participation and/or advertising as well as do our own initiatives.
      - ii. Recommendations:
        1. For upcoming events:
          - a. charge a minimum participation fee and donate proceeds.
          - b. Ask for donations
          - c. Bring in other organizations doing fundraising work
        2. Buy trailhead fundraising meals for first 'X' students who do 'Z'.
        3. Do a fundraiser.
      - iii. Any ideas or questions email Jordan J. (jjessamy@syr.edu)
    - b. SU GSO updates – Mike
      - i. "GSO at SU is a Mad House" - Mike
        1. President resigned after articles of impeachment filed against them.
        2. Daniel, the IVP, is now acting president. Mike met with them yesterday and has gotten ESF grad students included on GSO listserv.
        3. Mike address GSO at next meeting to make sure ESF's agreement with GSO is in writing. If no amenable agreement can be made, ESF may withdraw from their relationship and funding of the organization.
        4. Mike wants to get lump-sum payment back to students to address lack of tangible benefits to ESF students from GSO.
    - c. Upcoming social event:
      - i. Buried Acorn taproom on March 24th
      - ii. Cultural Dance night Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup> in Gateway. Will be catered by Habiba's with performance and beginner African dance lesson by OneWorks Dance.
  7. Date of next meeting
    - a. March 9, 2023
  8. Adjourn
    - a. Motioned by Mike, seconded by Shumaila.