

## UMBC GSA Fall 2020

### Executive Council Meeting

02 December 2020

#### I. Check-In & Attendance

Alex, Samantha, Kylie, Avijoy, Akriti, Aniket, Meghan, Ethan, and Dawn were present.

#### II. Reports

##### a. President

- i. Alex and Dawn met with leaders discussing housing accommodations for incoming students who need to quarantine. The director of off campus services is working with local hotels to reserve a set of rooms for students. Next week we will discuss GSA's financial input once a cost estimate is determined.
- ii. Next Thursday is the final senate meeting with the university leadership (Deans, Provost Roust, etc). This will be a good chance to discuss any pressing concerns and questions to be heard higher up. Come to the senate meeting ready for discussions.
- iii. Based on survey results, it seems like the number of students in need of resources is limited and can be addressed through existing systems.

##### b. Vice President

- i. Samantha spoke on behalf of GSA on November 18th at a meeting for learning.
- ii. The TA Engagement role previously mentioned was brought up again to help facilitate engagement in the classroom. The decision was to not make this mandatory but to provide faculty with a guide for professors/TAs who wish to implement these engagement ideas.
- iii. Samantha attended the COVID coordinating meeting and most things should look the same in the spring. Research lab compliance is good, UMBC and Towson are piloting the CRISP program which will share covid test results directly to the university.
- iv. The first spring 2021 academic meeting was this week.

##### c. Historian

- i. Kylie is brainstorming ways to restructure resources on the GSA website to make them more accessible and helpful for students.

- ii. In a meeting next week Kylie, Ethan, Alex, Samantha, and Dawn will discuss how Kylie and Ethan can improve communications to graduate students through the website and newsletter emails.
- d. Treasurer
  - i. Breakdowns for mandatory fees should be discussed in the next university finances meeting.
  - ii. Avijoy attended the Arbutus sustainable housing meeting. Community members shared that they would like to see Arbutus as a family environment and have reservations about it becoming overwhelmingly student populated.
  - iii. In the USM meeting student fees were discussed, and representatives were asked what students think about keeping up with paying fees through Covid restrictions and closures. There are different responses from students. One example: Towson students are still paying transportation fees, yet services have not resumed.
- e. GEARS
  - i. Aniket is working on a presentation for international students, talking about the general costs of accommodations.
  - ii. Bus services have not been working and Aniket asked if services will resume in January with an influx of new students. Alex suggests reaching out to Nancy Young.
- f. GAAC
  - i. Akriti was also part of the TA Engagement role discussion Samantha mentioned.
  - ii. Akriti's presentation at the most recent GEARS event was well received and she got positive feedback from students.
- g. Legislative Concerns
  - i. After the election the *A conversation with legislators* event had a great turnout. About 40 people showed up and the event went very well. Feedback forms show that more events like this are desired.
  - ii. Meghan meets weekly with the center for democracy and civic life. They want to make sure there is a good graduate student representation at meetings: Lisa is the best person to reach out to.
  - iii. Meghan is brainstorming the best format to use for building community among graduate students. Would a survey be useful to gauge interests?
  - iv. Regarding the Arbutus community meetings, Meghan suggested incorporating alumni and small businesses into the community and a need for better transportation (there are no good walking paths between campus and Arbutus).

### III. Business/Updates

- a. Old Business

- i. Survey - Discussion with Jeff Halverson
  1. Jeff is pleased with survey results. Time will be set aside in the next GPD meeting to discuss results with faculty. He suggested breaking the results into themes for each of his slides. Samantha seconded this idea.
  2. There was agreement that no one area had the most significant results, however there were severe **deficiencies in graduate students' knowledge of campus services**.
  3. Jeff suggested Alex and Samantha send him their highlights from the survey and the three of them will meet later on to discuss and construct slides.
  4. Discussion
    - a. Resources
      - i. Alex finds that the way undergraduate and graduate students receive information is very different (we see that many students did not know about campus resources), and figuring out the best way to relay this information
      - ii. Dawn asked if resources are shared during orientation. Samantha and Alex discussed how many are mixed in with other orientations and information overload
    - b. Akriti found the number of stressed students to be high
    - c. Avijoy suggested sharing results with students so they can see the bigger picture of students' well being and mental health. Alex agreed to send out the survey, but boil it down to a few graphs and bullet points.
    - d. Communicating Information
      - i. Ethan asked how to help share information Alex suggested creating catchy titles for emails.
      - ii. Meghan heard newsletters more beneficial than constant emails
      - iii. Samantha mentioned challenges in opening newsletters redirects to website and download pdf (on website not clickable)

#### IV. Open Discussion

- a. Avijoy wonders when incoming students' health insurance will be activated. Aniket suggested taking out short term travel insurance (~30 days). Alex agrees this information should be clear to students.
- b. Avijoy asked about TA engagement: what responsibilities have changed from pre-covid responsibilities. Samantha added that this will not be made mandatory for all TAs but rather

offered to faculty as a guide and option/suggestion for TAs if they want to improve the sense of belongingness and inclusion for students.