

Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee
Fact Sheet

ORGANIZATION:

A. Organization Contact Information

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>Address</u> | Student Union, Rm 213 2110 Hillside Rd, 03061 Storrs, CT 06269-3008 |
| 2. <u>Phone number</u> | (860) 486-3907 |
| 3. <u>Fax number</u> | (860) 486-0203 |
| 4. <u>Web address</u> | gss.uconn.edu |

B. History/Mission of Organization

1. History

The GSS was founded in 1966 in response to the need for a unified body to represent and support graduate students across the University, and continues to serve in this role today. The organization is comprised of graduate students coming from across academic disciplines who represent both academic constituencies (i.e., Tier II groups organizing graduate students from specific departments/disciplines) as well as non-academic constituencies (e.g., groups that cut across departments, like the Graduate Students of Color Association, TARANG, Green Grads, etc.).

The GSS both supports and engages in a variety of activities through funding of Tier II groups and performing valuable services not offered by other units of the University, for example, during a period in the late eighties and the early nineties, the GSS had compiled and published a Graduate Handbook (currently published by the Graduate School). In the same vein, the GSS currently organizes events such as the Graduate Appreciation and Information Night which introduces the incoming graduate students with local businesses (banks, restaurants, etc.) and various University service providers (Health Center, Parking and Transportation, Rainbow Center, etc.), serving as a form of graduate student orientation.

In addition, the GSS also supports graduate students in more direct roles such as running an Emergency Short-Term Loan Program, which has proven invaluable to grads (especially during the summer months, when a lot of grads have limited means of income) and during any payroll issues that may come up (especially with new graduate students). The GSS also acts as a liaison between graduate students and the administration and selects graduate students to serve as representatives on various University committees to help ensure that its constituents' interests are adequately represented across the institution.

2. Mission Statement

As one of the five deliberative bodies at UConn, the GSS is the sole body charged with

the representation of graduate students. The GSS's mission is to:

- Represent the graduate community within the University community and serve as a liaison between the graduate community and the administration;
- Serve as an advocate for the graduate community's concerns and needs to both University and non-University organizations;
- Provide services to meet the special needs of the University's diverse graduate community;
- Enhance and encourage cooperation and association within the graduate community;
- Enrich the lives of graduate students at UConn

C. Student Fees – dollar amount students pay per year
\$32/yr since FY15.

D. Eligible Participants – what students may participate in your activities?

All UConn graduate students who pay the Graduate Student Activity Fee are eligible to be elected as GSS Senators or members of the GSS Executive Committee, enabling them to directly participate in GSS policy making as well as perform control and oversight of GSS finances. Senators may represent academic programs or other recognized organizations whose members cut across programs (e.g., the Graduate Students of Color Association); they may also be at-large Senators charged with representing the entire graduate student body.

All registered Tier II groups consisting primarily of graduate students and/or wishing to run programming targeted at graduate students are eligible to apply for a yearly budget from the GSS, regardless of their membership in the GSS. Special Allocations are also available on a per-event basis.

All events and activities organized by or funded by the GSS must be open and accessible to all fee-paying graduate students at UConn (however, event accessibility need not be limited to graduate students).

All fee-paying graduate students are eligible to apply for short term interest free loans (up to \$1500.00) provided by GSS.

E. Governance (please identify the governance structure of your organization and identify those who are students and those who are not students)

1. Executive Officers

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| President: | Chriss Sneed |
| Vice President: | Matthew Parent |
| Secretary: | Jordan Rees |
| Treasurer: | null (Deepthi Varghese was elected but issues with F1 visas forced resignation) |
| Parliamentarian: | Don Hoy |
| Activities Director: | Bahareh Deljoo |

All of the officers are graduate students (and only graduate students are eligible for election)*.

*A discussion of this statement will be outlined under paid positions.

2. Board of Directors

The organization does not employ a Board of Directors.

3. Paid Positions

It is important for the Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee to understand who is being paid (if anyone), review the rationale behind these payments, how the rates are determined, and what internal oversight exists within the organization to oversee these payments.

If you pay student officers or other student positions and/or any member of your Board of Directors (whether they are students or community members), please complete the following information.

Student Officers (elected positions) paid (please list the titles):

All members of the GSS Executive Committee receive stipends. Payment is made at the end of each semester (for all Executive Committee members, with the exception of the President, who is paid monthly) via the University's payroll system, in accordance with the institution's (and the State's) established policies. In accordance with the Bylaws of the Graduate Student Senate, a vote of the full Senate is required to approve stipend payments for all Executive Committee members, with the exception of the President; furthermore, at the last Senate meeting of each month, any Senator can motion to adjust the pay of the President for that month by a majority close ballot vote.

A summary of the budget for Executive Committee stipends is noted below:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| President | up to \$3,600 |
| Vice President | up to \$1,000 |
| Secretary | up to \$1,000 |
| Treasurer | up to \$3,600 |
| Activities Director | up to \$2,000 |
| Parliamentarian | up to \$1,000 |

All of the aforementioned positions have received compensation in the past. Payment is made in consideration for the formidable amount of time and energy that the officers expend on behalf of the organization and its constituents.

***However, because of issues relating to F-1 visa restrictions, the Senate is considering revising this payment structure. The discussion of removing of all executive officer awards will take place at a future Senate meeting. At present, the above stands as the projection for the year.*

Appointed student positions paid (please list):

GSS currently has one appointed student position, an hourly wage (10 hours per week) worker to assist with the administrative functions that the GSS office requires to provide support and services to its constituents. The 10 hours per week workload was based on the workload of this position in past years, when it was a 10 hour graduate assistantship (GA). Most recently, the administrative assistant position was held by Ross Dardani (graduate student, Political Science).

The most recent pay rate for this position was \$15.00 per hour, which was within the pay range of a Class IV student labor position set by UConn Student Employment. Payments are made biweekly via the University's payroll system. This wage is appropriate, as the Administrative Assistant position is listed under Job Code 411/Student Administrative Specialist.

The total payment for the 2016-2017 was estimated to be \$7,730.33¹.

**Given the University's recent redefinition of a GA, GSS was not able to offer a GA, yet opted to keep the position in the form of student labor. However, the Senate may entertain a future discussion about reinstating a Graduate Assistantship for this position. This discussion will take at one of the meetings this semester. See the theoretical projection below for general implications stemming from this line of thinking.

Theoretical projection:

Since roughly \$12,328 is projected for Executive Board members, if the Senate does vote to take out stipends from the executive board, those resources would easily cover a 10 hour Graduate Assistantship for the duration of the academic year.

*12,200 + 1.05% allotted for worker's comp = 12,328.10²
12,328.10 - 11,121.44³ = 1,206.66 excess funds, which could cover any increase necessary overtime. Additionally, the \$7,730.33 already earmarked for the Administrative Assistant is not calculated within this total, and thus, could be thought of as a cushion within the budget as years and increases go by. Of course, this would have to be processed in conjunction with either the Graduate School or the Student Activities office.*

Board of Director Positions paid (please list):

n/a

¹ The rate for this was outlined in the April 20th, 2016 meeting minutes, along with the job ad.

² This is the total amount allotted within the budget for executive board stipends

³ This is the current yearly rate for a half-time graduate assistantship, as posted by the University payroll website

Storrs Student Activity Fund Budget Narrative Questions

Please answer the following questions in support of your budget proposal:

1. How are you **spending your funds** now? Briefly describe the programs and services provided.

In principle, the GSS uses the Trustee funds to engage in three major activities:

- a) Funding graduate Tier II organizations

The GSS provides funding to registered Tier II student organizations whose membership consists mainly of graduate students. There are two ways in which these groups are funded: (1) they can apply for a fiscal year budget (deadline: Jan 31st) which enables them to host multiple events per year and (2) groups can apply for Special Allocations which are funds allocated for a specific activity. Most groups which apply for funding are academically oriented organizations (e.g., Physics Graduate Student Association, Medical Anthropology Forum, English Graduate Students Association), but the GSS also funds non-academically oriented graduate student organizations (in the current allocation: TARANG, for example).

When deciding on which events to fund, the events must "contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and/or professional capital of the graduate student body" and preference is be given to events that "have an appeal which extends beyond the members of one academic discipline" (GSS Financial Policies and Procedures, Section 1.2). Decisions about budgets are made by the Finance Committee, a standing Committee of the GSS whose members are elected by the Senate. Special Allocations are decided on by the Executive Committee of the GSS.

- b) Emergency Short-Term Loans

The GSS provides short-term, zero-interest loans of up to \$1500.00 to graduate students who find themselves in need of such support. This year, the fund was projected to be \$115,867.94. The loan fund is occasionally replenished with new funds allocated from the GSS budget in order to assure the stability of the fund. The actual disbursement of funds and repayment of principle is handled by the Bursar's Office. We are negotiating the current procedure for this in the coming weeks.

- c) Activities

Under the Activities Director's and Executive Committee's guidance, the GSS directly hosts a small number of events during the year. These events range from midsize gatherings (Social Nights) to large celebrations ("Grad Prom,"

Thanksgiving Dinner) to information sessions (Graduate Appreciation and Information Night, and in the recent past the GSS Professional Development Symposium).

2. Please explain any **significant changes in your budget/spending plan** for the FY17 (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017) and for FY18 (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018) fiscal years.

At present, GSS has not spent as much as anticipated for this point in the year. This is due to the troubles regarding F-1 student leadership, which affected our Treasurer for the past 8 months. However, the GSS Activities Director and Executive Board plan to hold events across throughout the Spring semester to use the allotted monies for the fiscal year. Further, the Tier II organizations will be encouraged to do the same.

In the future, the GSS plans to continue to increase the quantity of funds available to graduate student organizations for the forthcoming fiscal year. The reason for this is that from year to year requests for funding generally increase in both number and size. For the current fiscal year, the executive board recommended that 26 Tier II groups have collective access to \$59,628. Of course, this fund has been allocated through individual applications that vary in size but we hope to continue this trend in the future. The GSS is especially interested in increasing funding available to Tier IIs and academic groups to help facilitate the execution of professional development events, research projects or initiatives; innovative scholarship or creative works; and leadership growth, along with programming that allow students to enjoy cultural events that further the University's mission¹ to create global citizens. This includes various collaborations between Tier IIs and other student groups like conferences, curriculum vitae review and discussion, faculty-student meet and greets, dinners and socials, scholarly debates, career services programming, and more.

Further, through our own activities budget, GSS seeks to offer events and services that are anchored in our own mission², which is centered on advocating for Graduate students, providing services to our diversity Graduate community, create places for dialog and interaction, and more generally, enhance the lives of graduate students at the University of Connecticut. Thus, we hope to create programs that allow for socializing, civic engagement between graduate students and the University at large, nourishment (cultural, professional, and physical), and more platforms for graduate student voices to be heard on campus. This will include social nights already historical present and future collaborations with University centers and institutions whose visions may appeal to graduate students across the UCONN campuses. Additionally, the GSS will take these matters into consideration when awarded special allocations to graduate student constituencies and the Executive Board.

¹ Notes taken from University Mission: <http://academicvision.uconn.edu/introduction/core-values/>

² Notes taken from GSS Constitution: <http://gss.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1032/2015/01/GSS-Constitution-2014.05.12.pdf>

3. Do you anticipate any **changes in income from other sources** (non-student fee) during the FY17, FY18 and FY19 fiscal years? If so, briefly explain.

Largely, no. We are a non-profit organization and do not anticipate more income for the organization's operation or budgets to Tier II organizations beyond the student fees already established.

We do aspire to do fundraisers over the next few years. The sole purpose of these funds would be to create 1) small research grants or 2) emergency provisions necessary to provide for populations affected by political persecution. The latter comes to mind most recently because of the racialized and xenophobic "Muslim Ban" imposed by the 45th president. Any funds raised will be explicitly separate from our student fee budget and will be monitored by the Executive Board, SABO, and Graduate Student Senate as required in our financial policies³.

4. What are the current and projected **levels of your reserves/fund balances**? If you have a fund balance, please describe the use/purpose of these resources.

Last year's fund balance is a little under \$24,000.00. These funds were earmarked to be used for reimbursing Tier II groups for the expenses made within their allocated budgets, running GSS-organized activities (the major one is "Grad Prom" held in February), paying the office assistant as well as paying stipends to the executive committee, and paying for office expenses (phone, paper, toner, etc.). Because of our transition with executive officers, our current fund balance is higher than last year. On one hand, we did spend more on our welcome event than anticipated in our 2016-2017 projection (approximately \$9000 instead of \$6400), but on the other hand, we did not host the Halloween event (\$3350). This largely balances out; however, since we did not have "happy hours" in the fall 2016 semester, the Activities budget currently has a bigger surplus than last year. However, since we plan to hold an equitable amount of events and seminars in the spring (including the major "Grad Prom" event), we expect this to mirror last year's reserve fund rate.

Our short term loan fund has been well utilized this year. This was especially apparent during the summer months and the end of the fall 2016 semester. We feel this is a vital resource we provide as often there is insufficient overlap with renewing GA/TA stipends and a loan is needed to bridge the gap. Additionally, the loan fund was important for some of GA/TAs who were not paid on time (as reported by the Union in September 2016). A breakdown of the current loan fund amount is attached, along with our account overview.

³ In item 4.2.3 of our financial policies, it states that individual funding requests are only appropriate in the case that the "Graduate Student Senate acts as the mechanism by which donations are collected for a specific group or cause and then distributed accordingly." (Financial Policies and Procedures: Page 8)

http://gss.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1032/2015/01/GSS-FPP_2013.03.27.pdf

5. Please describe the organizational priorities you address in your proposed FY19 budget. Are there any concerns or issues the Committee should be aware of when reviewing your budget?

The GSS prioritizes spending our budget to support and enrich graduate students above all. We actively work to ensure our funds can reach the most number of graduate students possible. This is done by complimenting their research work with professional development events and support for symposiums and conferences to gather the best and brightest minds in the field at UCONN. As articulated earlier, we would like to enhance the overall lives of graduate students across each campus through a variety of programming initiatives and endeavors.

6. Relative to your fund balance (if you have one), what do you anticipate your accounts payable (items to pay for) and accounts receivable (money to collect) will be over the last two months of the fiscal year (May and June)?

During the summer months, the GSS makes payments for summer stipends, student labor wages, and the supplies and services needed to run the GSS Office, as well as Tier II-organized events during the summer, with activities occurring between May 15 and August 15 needing prior approval by the GSS Finance Committee (Section 7.3 of the GSS Finance Policies and Procedures). At this point, two major differences will be reflected in the budget. First, because of the issues with visa restrictions, the Treasurer has not been paid any part of the allotted stipend up until this point. This means that approximately \$1933 of the operations budget will not go towards the line item assigned to Treasurer. Second and also related to the visa restrictions discussions⁴, the President has declined all associated pay for their remaining tenure as President of GSS. This went into effect as of January. This means that at least \$333 (and up to \$999.99) will remain in the operations budget.

Any leftover funds are likely to be depleted at the very beginning of the next fiscal year due to the fact that we organize a major event in August and expect a major quarterly bill, coupled with probable delays in student fee funds disbursements during that time frame.

7. Please describe how students (number and/or percentage of total student population) **utilize your services and/or participate** in your programs? Do faculty/staff (number/percentage) benefit? Do members of the local community (number/percentage) benefit?

As per the University's guidelines, and the State of Connecticut's Comptroller's Office, no faculty or staff member receives any direct financial benefits from the

⁴ Since the Executive Board positions are listed as employment, all officers must fill out a dual employment form. Dissatisfied with this conclusion and also restricted by department employment policies, the President has decided to reject all payment and was taken out of the pay system in SABO.

funds that the GSS stewards on behalf of its constituents. As noted in the Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee Fact Sheet, all University graduate students are able to avail themselves of GSS and GSS-funded activities. The number of students who choose to exercise this option varies considerably across different activities and times throughout the school year. In certain occasions, local community members (as well as faculty and staff) may benefit intellectually from GSS-funded Tier II-organized activities; these instances usually occur when they attend a graduate research symposium, a guest speaker lecture or a similar event.

8. When was an **audit last performed** by the University's Office of Audit, Compliance and Ethics? Please list the date the final Audit report was submitted to you, the list of any financially related Recommendations, and a status report on the actions taken to comply with the Recommendation(s).

The GSS has not had an audit performed since the last budget hearing.

9. When reviewing the results from the Tier III Awareness, Familiarity and Use survey from last spring, what is your organization's focus on regarding areas for improvement? What actions have you taken so far this year to improve? What results are you proud of and are working to maintain?

We are continuously trying to reach a broader audience and make as many graduate students aware of GSS as possible. We have reorganized our graduate school orientation in coordination with several departments on campus to make as many incoming graduate students as possible aware of our presence and resources. Starting in February 2016, those interested in virtually attending the meetings have been able to reach out to GSS to set up a proper connection. Further, we hope to engage students more across departments to foster a more inclusive and collaborative environment.

10. Is there any **additional information** that the committee should be aware of in reviewing your budget proposal?

The GSS continues to contribute to the cultural and intellectual capital of the graduate student body, and thus, the University as a whole. As an example of the latter, in the previous couple of years, GSS has completely revamped its financial policies and procedures resulting in greater transparency and devolving a number of important financial powers from the office of the Treasurer to the office of the Vice President (receives and reviews appeals to financial decisions) and the Finance Committee (Treasurer is a non-voting chair, the seven-member Committee reviews Tier II budgets and proposes a fiscal year budget to the Senate).

This year, we have been faced with extraordinary difficulties because of the unfortunate labeling of executive positions as employment. For much of the year, we have operated without a full-time treasurer, which has created substantial strain on both the Executive Board and the Tier II groups we fund. Despite this, we have continuously worked through dilemmas and obstructions to our programming. In some ways, these issues have forced us to step up our advocacy efforts, which can be exemplified in the current discussion about international student fees, executive board stipends, and graduate student life more generally at the university. Further, the current president has dedicated many hours to review and submit proposals/disbursements within an already limited schedule. Additionally, we ran workshops within GSS meetings to help Tier IIs better understand the submission process for reimbursements and future requests. This year, we also have noticed different anomalies (like an overcharge from an event in Spring 2016, for instance) in the GSS budget and are working to set up precedents to ensure the smooth transition and future operation of the organization.

In addition to the financial support provided to Tier II groups, the GSS is proud of being able to alleviate the financial strains that graduate students face both during times of little-to-no income (especially during the summer) as well as throughout the entire year due to the looming fee and health insurance cost increases and the loss of work-study opportunities.

**University of Connecticut
Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee
Activity Fee Budget Update & Projection Form - Fiscal Year 2016-2019**

Organization: GSS
 Contact Person: Matthew Parent (VP)
 Phone: 860-436-3907

| | FY16 Actual | FY17 Original | FY17 UPDATED | FY18 Original | FY18 UPDATED | FY19 PROJECTED |
|--|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| Sub code Description | Amount | Amount | Amount | Amount | Amount | Amount |
| Revenues: | | | | | | |
| 501 Donations | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| 502 Dues | | | | | | |
| 512 Advertising | | | | | | |
| 513 Awards and Prizes | | | | | | |
| 515 Contractual Services | | | | | | |
| 516 Co-Sponsorships | | | | | | |
| 517 Food Sales | | | | | | |
| 518 Merchandise Sales | | | | | | |
| 519 Participation Fees | 36 | 100 | | 100 | | |
| 522 Registration Fees | | | | | | |
| 523 Rental | | | | | | |
| 524 Travel | | | | | | |
| 530 Penalties and Fees | | | | | | |
| 531 Miscellaneous | | | | | | |
| 532 Prior Year Income | | | | | | |
| 533 Change Fund Returns | | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| 540 Business Taxes (Tier III/Univ.) | | | | | | |
| 546 Interest (Univ.) | 154 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 547 Student Fees (Tier III/Univ.) | 108,058 | 102,400 | 107,200 | 102,400 | 107,200 | 107,200 |
| Total Revenues: | \$ 108,248 | \$ 102,800 | \$ 107,500 | \$ 102,800 | \$ 107,500 | \$ 107,500 |
| Expenditures: | | | | | | |
| 601 Donations | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| 602 Dues | | | | | | |
| 603 Gifts | | 400 | 500 | 400 | 500 | 500 |
| 604 Photocopying | | 250 | 250 | 250 | 300 | 300 |
| 605 Postage | 1 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 120 | 120 |
| 606 Printing | 659 | 500 | 1,500 | 500 | 1,500 | 1,500 |
| 607 Promotional Items | 717 | 800 | 750 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| 608 Refreshments - Organization | 1,673 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 3,000 | 3,500 |
| 609 Subscriptions | | | | | | |
| 610 Supplies - Organization | 1,103 | 450 | 750 | 450 | 450 | 550 |
| 611 Telephone | 438 | 550 | 550 | 550 | 550 | 550 |
| 612 Advertising | | 200 | 500 | 200 | 500 | 500 |
| 613 Awards and Prizes | 885 | 400 | 1000 | 400 | 1250 | 1500 |
| 615 Contractual Services | 10494.50 | 14,000 | 15000 | 14,000 | 15000 | 15000 |
| 616 Co-Sponsorships | | | | | | |
| 617 Cost of Goods Sold - Food Sales | | | | | | |
| 618 Cost of Goods Sold - Merchandise Sales | | | | | | |
| 619 Participation Fees | 887 | 200 | 250 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| 620 Refreshments - Events/Programs | 42885.02 | 50,000 | 43000 | 50,000 | 50000 | 50000 |
| 621 Supplies - Events/Programs | 3,224 | 1,800 | 3500 | 1,800 | 4000 | 4500 |
| 622 Registration Fees | 193.36 | | | | | |
| 623 Rental | 704 | 2,500 | 1000 | 2,500 | 2000 | 2000 |
| 624 Travel | 3,695 | 5,500 | 5,000 | 5,500 | 5,500 | 5,500 |
| 625 Equipment | 2297.83 | | 1000 | | 1000 | 2000 |
| 626 Equipment - Capital | | | | | | |
| 627 Insurance | | | | | | |
| 628 Repairs and Maintenance | | | | | | |
| 629 Utilities | | | | | | |
| 630 Penalties and Fees | | | | | | |
| 631 Miscellaneous | | 5,000 | 0 | 5,000 | 0 | 0 |
| 632 Prior Year Expenses | | | | | | |
| 633 Change Funds | | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| 640 Business Taxes (Tier III/Univ.) | | | | | | |
| 641 Employee Benefits (Tier III) | | | | | | |
| 642 Wages - Student (Tier III) | 18480 | 17,800 | 17000 | 17,000 | 23000 | 23000 |
| 643 Wages - Non-Student (Tier III) | | | | | | |
| 644 Wage Taxes - Student (Tier III) | 198 | 350 | 0 | 350 | 0 | 0 |
| 645 Wage Taxes - Non-Student (Tier III) | | | | | | |
| Total Expenditures: | \$ 86,096 | \$ 103,200 | \$ 94,850 | \$ 103,400 | \$ 110,070 | \$ 112,420 |
| Revenues Less Expenditures: | \$ 22,152 | \$ (400) | \$ 12,650 | \$ (600) | \$ (2,570) | \$ (4,920) |
| Use of Surplus: | \$ 0 | \$ 400 | \$ 0 | \$ 600 | \$ 2,570 | \$ 4,920 |
| Total (Must be equal to or greater than zero.): | \$ 22,152 | \$ 0 | \$ 12,650 | \$ 0 | \$ 0 | \$ 4,200 |
| Fund Balance At Beginning Of Year: | \$ 38,229 | \$ 25,201 | \$ 60,381 | \$ 24,801 | \$ 73,031 | \$ 70,461 |
| Fund Balance At Year End: | \$ 60380.85 | \$ 24,801 | \$ 73030.85 | \$ 24,201 | \$ 70480.85 | \$ 69740.85 |