Student Activity and Service Fee Advisory Committee
Fact Sheet

ORGANIZATION:

A. Organization Contact Information
   1. Campus Address
      Student Union, Rm 213, 2110 Hillside Rd, 03061 Storrs, CT 06269-3008
   2. Campus Phone number
      (860) 486-3907
   3. Organization Web address
      www.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 from across academic disciplines who represent both
      academic constituencies (i.e., Tier II groups organizing graduate students with a specific discipline) as well
      as non-academic constituencies (e.g., groups that cut across disciplines, like the Graduate Students of
      Color Association, TARANG, GOLS, 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 Welcome Barbecue in order to facilitate building and improving the graduate student
      community.
      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

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.

In addition, all graduate students (not just senators) can participate in and have their voices heard at GSS meetings.

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: Justin Fang
Vice President: Erin Curry
Communications Director: Ngoc Chau Vy
Treasurer: Kevin Boyd
Parliamentarian: Andrew Meguerdichian
Activities Director: Jennifer Caffyn

All of the officers are graduate students.

2. Board of Directors

The organization does not employ a Board of Directors.

3. Paid Positions

Student Officers (elected positions) paid (please list the titles):
All members of the GSS Executive Committee receive travel fund reimbursements. These travel funds are to be used by members of the Executive Committee to attend conferences or other events with the objective of bringing back useful knowledge and information that can be disseminated to the graduate population.

The scope of travel and the type of events attended are at the discretion of individual Executive Committee members, within the financial limits listed below. At any time, the Senate may propose a vote to deny such travel funding to an officer who is not appropriately performing, or has not appropriately performed, his or her duties. A simple majority vote will inhibit travel fund disbursement. After earned as stipulated by Bylaw VI:6, reimbursement may be applied retrospectively to travel taken after the start of the respective officer’s term. Travel funds available to officers of the execution of duties as defined in the GSS Constitution and Bylaws shall be limited to the following totals for each office, regardless of the number of individuals serving in each office.

i. President
   Up to $500 after 3 months served.
   Up to $1,000 after 6 months served.
   Up to $1,500 after 8 months served.
   Up to $2,000 after 10 months served.
   Up to $2,500 after 11 months served.
   Up to $3,600 after 12 months served

ii. Vice President
    Up to $200 after 4 months served.
    Up to $500 after 6 months served.
    Up to $1,000 after 11 months served.

iii. Communications Director
     Up to $200 after 4 months served.
     Up to $500 after 6 months served.
     Up to $2,000 after 12 months served.

iv. Treasurer
    Up to $500 after 3 months served.
    Up to $1,000 after 6 months served.
    Up to $1,500 after 8 months served.
    Up to $2,000 after 10 months served.
    Up to $2,500 after 11 months served.
    Up to $3,600 after 12 months served

v. Activities Director
   Up to $500 after 3 months served
   Up to $1,000 after 6 months served.
   Up to $2,000 after 11 months served.

vi. Parliamentarian
    Up to $200 after 4 months served.
    Up to $500 after 6 months served.
    Up to $1,000 after 11 months served.
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. All of the aforementioned positions have received stipends in the past. The change from stipends to travel reimbursements was made due to issues relating to F-1 visa restrictions.

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). 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 2017-2018 was estimated to be $8,084.00.
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. 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 have changed the bylaws to make the disbursement and
      repayment procedure smoother.
   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 midsized gatherings (Social Nights) to large celebrations
      (Grad Prom, Thanksgiving lunch, Welcome Back BBQ) 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 FY19 (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019) and for FY20 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020) fiscal years.

   We have increased our spending estimates for FY19 by roughly $13,000 to align with our goals for reducing
   our fund balance, detailed in point 4. In addition, funds have been shifted from the Wages category to
   travel, reflecting the fact that the executive board is now compensated with travel reimbursements rather
   than stipends.

3. Do you anticipate any changes in income from other sources (non-student fee) during the FY19, FY20
   and FY21 fiscal years? If so, briefly explain.

   No.

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.
As of the start of FY 19, we have a fund balance of $86,378. This has accrued in recent years due partially to past discontinuity of GSS infrastructure, leading to reduced spending of supported tier II organizations. Our organization has now regained it’s expenditure stability, and in FY18 spent almost exactly as much money as was brought in through fees. Maintaining a fund balance serves several purposes for the GSS.

a. Much of our budget is allocated to pay for activities of various tier II graduate organizations. The actual amount spent by these organizations is always less than what is budgeted for, hence we have to factor in a stochastic element when budgeting. Maintaining a fund balance is essential when the year-to-year expenditures of the tier II organizations has an unclear element.

b. The GSS maintains some capital equipment (computers, tents for outdoor activities) that will need replacing in the future. Our fund balance will be necessary to increase expenditure during a year in which those purchases must be made.

However, the current balance is excessive with regards to those needs, and we therefore plan to draw down our fund balance over the next several years. That goal will primarily be achieved by allocating more funding to tier II organization activities. We estimate that a year-to-year balance that would cover our needs to be in the $20,000 range. As our current balance is in excess of $80,000, our plan is to increase expenditures to decrease our balance by $20,000 over FY19, FY20, and FY21, ending FY21 with a balance of roughly $20,000.

5. Please describe the organizational priorities in your proposed FY21 budget. Are there any concerns/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. Furthermore, as many graduate students lack social options around Storrs, GSS provides the events such as the welcome back BBQ, Thanksgiving lunch, and Grad Prom to entertain graduate students at UCONN.

6. Are you proposing an increase in your organization fee for FY21? If yes, please provide the rationale for your request (include any information regarding the limits of your organization if the fee increase is not approved). What steps has your organization taken to reduce expenses and/or increase other revenues? What is the dollar increase you are asking per year? On the budget spreadsheet, please complete an additional column for FY21 that outlines how your organization will allocate the additional revenue from the proposed fee increase.

No, we are not proposing an increase in the fee for GSS for FY21.

7. 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)?

We do not expect to collect significant revenue in May and June, as student fees and interest comprise our entire revenue, which are collected at the beginning of semesters. We expect our fund balance at the end of this term to be close to $75,000. In the months of May and June we would paying off the monthly bills from April and May, which would comprise of admin wages, telephone charges, mail charges, payment for our grad prom and end of year barbecue. All this would roughly cost us around
$15,000. Our final balance at the end of FY19 would then be on the order of $60,000, in line with our stated goals.

8. 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 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.

9. 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, and provide a list of any financially related Recommendations. If any of the Recommendations are still open, please provide a status report.

Student Activities Business Services was last audited in Spring 2015, which included all GSS transactions. There were no findings resulting from this audit.

10. 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 did not participate in this year’s survey. We readily receive feedback from graduate students and tier II organizations throughout the year.

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

No

We, the undersigned, confirm we sought input from our constituents and members via an item on a meeting agenda. Further, we attest that this budget packet was presented to, and approved by our organization at an open meeting on the following date: ________________.

[Signatures and dates]

Organization Chief Executive Officer
Printed Name

Organization Chief Financial Officer
Printed Name

Organization Chief Executive Officer
Signature

Organization Chief Financial Officer
Signature

Date

Date
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