

GSO Meeting Notes
17:30, Wednesday, November 11, 2020
Zoom Meeting ID: 953 4196 4861 Passcode: 675923

Time	Item	Notes
17:30	Welcome (President - Khadija El Karfi)	<p>1. Representative Email List</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Please fill out this Google Doc if you haven't already with your name and department to help us keep track of the rep email list.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mCkkmd1usU1SkyFqqXZgW4WJ0tbkbVfcpvB3_kOkwQl/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>2. The proxy system: If you can't make a meeting rather than finding a replacement student, we have a designated proxy - our Vice President, Shannon Bewley. To use our proxy system, your representative simply has to read through our agenda ahead of time and coordinate their comments and votes with the vice president before the meeting, preferably via email (sbewley@bu.edu).</p> <p>3. GSO's Mailing List: You can subscribe/unsubscribe from our mailing list by following this link: https://www.bu.edu/gso/join-our-mailing-list/</p> <p>4. New collaboration form for GSO non-monetary requests https://www.bu.edu/gso/cosponsoredevents/</p> <p>5. Statement from GSO E-board:</p> <p>Before we go through today's meeting agenda, the e-board and I want to discuss the conversation we had during our last GSO meeting about the book club. As we discussed the book, <u>The Sun Does Shine</u>, we characterized it as an "easy read." A GSO rep immediately identified and notified how inappropriate this statement was, and collectively as the e-board we apologize for this statement. We also apologize for not addressing this concern more thoughtfully before the conclusion of last week's meeting. As an e-board, we are continually working on our awareness and ability to address situations like this.</p> <p>We want to make the selection process for the Book Club very clear. Only a few people voted in the poll as to which book would be read, and in essence, there was an 8-way tie to decide the winner. <u>The Sun Does Shine</u></p>

		<p>was selected because we, and numerous critics, consider it to be a masterpiece. This is a beautifully written book that is deserving of praise in every possible sense. To label it as an “easy read” does not do justice to this story about an individual’s oppression at the hands of the American incarceration system. There is nothing remotely “easy” about such a story. We intended to frame the book as “quick” in the sense that it is an engrossing and hard to put down page-turner, particularly in the present moment. We want to make it absolutely clear that this was in no way meant to be a commentary on the intellectual merits of the book or the author. We acknowledge that through our poor word choice we committed a microaggression that stigmatized diverse educational and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as minimized the seriousness of racism and injustice specifically enacted on the Black community. For this, we are deeply sorry.</p> <p>In addition, we apologize that a GSO rep had to point out anything at all; we should be more aware of our language because we are the face of GSO, the ones who meet with BU administration, and represent all of you and your concerns. We need to be better and we recognize that we need to be proactive with our improvement.</p> <p>We have taken and are taking some steps to address and to minimize the possibility that incidents such as this do not happen in the future. Most of all, we can all work together to improve what GSO can do if cases like this happen. We’ll make sure to circulate this apology, and the response back to the GSO rep (with name redacted) who very kindly shared their clear concerns to hold ourselves accountable and responsible.</p> <p>In our next GSO meeting, we invite you to discuss and create community guidelines with us on respectful language and disagreement. We have already been in contact with Crystal Williams, the Dean of Diversity and Inclusion, and are finding a way to not only attend but organize a workshop about micro-aggression, equity, and inclusivity training for all GRS students. This may take a bit of time as our efforts this semester to coordinate with BU’s various resources have proved challenging. However, as the e-board, we think that it is important for us to make every effort to ensure we do not make this mistake again. Finally, we invite the entire GSO community to create resources that collectively help train us to acknowledge and openly discuss anti-racist strategies and efforts, beginning with crafting a set of community guidelines together that we will discuss at our next meeting.</p>
17:40	Guest - introduction by Vice President, Shannon Bewley	<p>Phillippa Pitts, Sarah Sklar, and Ben Suitt from CTL will join us to share information about what their office can offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Graduate teaching consultants: sharing information about CTL’s resources for grad students (bu.edu/ctl) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workshops surrounding teaching questions and concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Next on Dec 11 @ 10 am ○ Coffee breaks: informal space for an hour to discuss any questions or difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Next one is Nov 17th @ 1:30-2:30 pm ○ Lightning Talks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> https://digital.bu.edu/bu-lightning-talks-fall-2020/

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CTL website ■ Twitter: @bu_ctl ■ Blackboard site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Variety of resources including a section with guidelines for how to help students in distress ● Opening a conversation for what resources graduate students would like to see <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Please email Phillipa, Sarah, or Ben with comments or suggestions!
17:55	Guest - introduction by President, Khadija El Karfi	<p>Dean Malika Jeffries-El will also be joining our meeting to answer any questions or concerns you may have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GRS summer funding updates particularly on internships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trying to increase numbers of potential internships but it depends on whether more money will be opened up to be able to do that ○ Consulting with her graduate student council and there's a lot of concern around the future particularly with the different hierarchies of 8, 10 and 12-month stipends for different departments ● Are applications for new PhD students being accepted this year? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provost is waiting and considering different options; currently the portals are open but they're currently making decisions about whether it will remain open ● Many teaching fellows are struggling to maintain their ability to come to campus to teach as their living situations or health conditions may change. Can the Workplace Adjustment Form be submitted at different points in the semester to reflect these personal changes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, absolutely ○ For the Spring Semester: Submit your Workplace Adjustment Form now before you even know what your exact situation is ● Which departments pay students on a 10-month cycle? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10-month stipend: English ○ mixed department bag whose incoming students only have this HAA, history, AMNESP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Taken up the option to reduce incoming class by 1-2 students to ensure they have 10-month funding for all incoming students ○ 8-month stipends for all students: Philosophy, Religion, Poli Sci, Romance Studies, anthropology ○ Wanting to get to all students on 10-month stipends within 1-2 years, but unsure about budget with the pandemic ● Can there be a health insurance resource page from GRS or Provost beyond what GSO provides? Other updates on the progress for getting dental coverage?

- There's no one dedicated to the health and wellness for GRS students, which should be corrected.
 - Have already gotten approval to hire someone to do this within GRS but the hiring freeze during the pandemic postponed that process
- Dental insurance's possibility really needs to be researched, but agrees we all need better dental.
- The way US health insurance separates vision and dental from general health coverage is an issue as well.
 - Hoping that we can move the needle on this issue
- One representative understands that the English department is working on helping students extend funding (based on Covid-based delays) but wondering if there are other sources of funding for graduate students who had to delay research based on the pandemic?
 - So far nothing has materialized. They're currently in a holding pattern with Provost office on the impacts for budget restrictions/impacts.
 - Waiting to hear back from the Provost's office because they had initially assumed that the colleges would be able to handle the costs. However, the individual colleges don't have the money to be able to cover it.
 - Taking all of these issues one step at a time and particularly considering people with more urgent situations, such as later on in their PhD trajectory, over people who are currently in their 2nd year and still taking classes.
- A lot of graduate students understand the need to cancel spring break for regulating travel but many of us usually carve out that time to prepare applications or make other progress. Can you describe the reasoning behind this?
 - This is one of the decisions that makes sense for safety and health but less so for real life and living in that space.
 - She recommends that we do what we need to do and maybe have conversations with our main instructors about making the workload one week a bit lighter.
 - She wants to point out that continually going full-steam ahead with a usual pace just isn't the way to go in this moment.
 - Does want to call attention to the additional funding for students with children that the Provost office allocated.
 - The first set of applications for funding has gone through and been dispersed so be sure to apply for the Spring semester if you qualify.
- Is there a possibility of bringing in 3-day weekends in the Spring semester?
 - Getting consensus and alignment between the different colleges at BU to do this would be extremely complicated

- There's a possibility for future snow days tho!
- Jeffries-EL: what's one thing you'd like to see GRS do for students?
 - Having GRS coordinate events or workshops between different centers etc at BU
 - CAS working with CASARI's concerns and she feels like there's a lot of similarities between their concerns and GRS students' concerns. However, she does want actions and events to be intentional and not just have them be a knee-jerk reactions that aren't well thought-out
 - They will be setting dates well in advance and there is already scheduling happening for events in the Spring Semester
 - Coordinating with Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator
 - Really taking on different aspects of intersectionality
 - Would like these to be "conversation and strategic planning" more than just listening sessions
- Can we make a visit from Dean to GSO each semester
 - YES, absolutely!
- Some grad teachers vulnerable to COVID were rattled by the late-breaking communication about LfA over this past summer. Having more reassurance for those who are unable to teach in person that they will be able to remain online in the Spring would be great. Much of the communication last summer was unclear and some feared that they would have to either teach or lose their health insurance.
 - Expects the announcement about this coming summer will happen early in the Spring semester so there isn't as much of a surprise.
 - Remote learning last summer really exploded in popularity and so she fully expects that there could be a remote or hybrid planning this summer.
 - FYI summer semester has its own Dean
 - Teaching summer classes does provide grad students with good income so it's a concern that she wants to address.
 - We are not canceling any full-time students' health insurance so long as you are fulfilling your service obligations
 - Also as a point, your summer health insurance depends on your status from the academic year not on what you do over the summer months