

BU GSO – General Body Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 11, 2022

Time: 6:00 pm

I. Welcoming remarks by the President

- a. Join Slack Channel for GSO Reps:
https://join.slack.com/t/bugso2021/shared_invite/ztobqpc210-gxJTsxWWkWL7n4ioaAfkiw
- b. Join the GSO mailing list: <https://www.bu.edu/gso/join-our-mailing-list/>

II. E-board Reports

a. President's Report

1. Currently working on GSO Annual Report from 2020-2022
2. Upcoming:
 - i. Planning to organize presentations within department orientations
 - ii. Planning Fall 2022 Grad Student Fair
 - iii. Upcoming meeting with Dean Jeffries and Provost Kleinman

b. VP's Report

1. Description of the Proxy System (monan@bu.edu)
2. Regarding visa renewal issues and international travel due to US consulate closure for students from Ukraine and Russia
 - i. Meeting with Stacey G. Harris from Dean of students
 - ii. Meeting with Lauren Jeffery from ISSO
 - iii. Summer funding issues: Stan
 - iv. All resources can be condensed into one document

c. Treasurer's Report

1. Working with Janette and Anna (our new GRS contact) to process reimbursement requests from PhD students
2. Planning to work with Arcadia and our GRS contacts to develop the proposed GSO budget for next year - will focus on what new items should be included in the proposed budget and what old items should be removed from the proposed budget

d. Secretary's Report

1. Archive request – trying to build out GSO’s archive both for organizational memory and for use in social media, etc. Request for GSO reps to share photos of current or old events

e. Social Chair Report

1. We have successfully completed two pub nights, and the last one of the semester will be on April 22.

f. International Student Relations Chair Report

1. Trying to work with ISSO to address question of summer funding for Ukrainian and Russian students who will be unable to go home due to current conflict. Most do not receive year-round funding but now can’t work at home during summer months.

g. Travel Grants Chair Report

1. April 2022 grant cycle closed; grants under review
 - i. Increase in applications relative to all cycles since onset of COVID-19, likely reflecting loosened travel restrictions & in-person conferences
 - ii. Anticipating to communicate committee review decisions by the end of April
2. Next grant cycle = August 1, 2022 (for travel/expenses occurring between August 1, 2022 and ~late August, 2023)
3. Interest in serving on review committee next cycle? Reach out to the chair at: gsogrant@bu.edu!

IV. Old Business

1. Members needed for:
 - i. Travel Grants Committee
 1. Assist in reviewing travel grant applications
 - ii. Social Committee
 1. Assist in planning and executing social events
 2. Assist in managing all GSO social media accounts
 - iii. International Student Relations Committee –
 1. Assist in finding resources for international students
 2. Assist in planning and executing events for international students
 - iv. Orientation Committee – no one signed up for yet
 1. Assist in creating the GSO presentation for orientations
 2. Assist in attending and presenting at orientations
2. Benefits: low-time commitment; get more involved with GSO, engage in service opportunities that are great for the resume, meet other students in and out of GSO.
3. Sign ups: <https://forms.gle/DJZd1M4b3oBUYkoZ6> -

V. New Business

a. Open Eboard positions for Fall 2022

1. Social chair – election will be held at May meeting
 - i. Oversee social committee
 - ii. Run all social media accounts
 - iii. Create and send biweekly newsletters
 - iv. Plan GSO social events
2. Travel Grants Chair
 - i. Travel grants is the only committee chair that is not elected. Typically, it is nominated from within the travel committee (almost always with only 1 member being interested for a given year)
 - ii. Beginning Fall 2022, travel grants will be paid, so should it move to an elected position?
 - iii. Recommendations from current chair: At least one-semester on travel grants committee required for the position. If no such person is eligible/able to be recruited internally, then open up to the full graduate student body of GRS (or full BU if all departments merged)
 - iv. **Vote:** Should this become an elected position or remain nominated? 12/7 in favor of it remaining a nominated position

b. LinkedIn Headshots

1. April 23rd from 9am-12pm on BU Beach
2. Formal invitation being emailed out shortly
3. Open to all GRS students
4. Due to feedback from last semester, photos will be within individual password protected folders

c. Marathon Monday Event

1. GSO is co-sponsoring “BU does the marathon”
 - i. Celebrate Marathon Monday at the BU Does the Marathon watch party! Marathoners, free swag, snacks, music & more. Monday, April 18, 12 – 2pm. At the corner of Beacon & Park Drive and the corner of Beacon & Amory Street. More info + sign up for a reminder at <https://marathon.eventbrite.com/>
 - ii. Interested in helping out? Volunteer form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc62y8VkhSnxpHIPa6F8KKKGGC87xl-BazdVxGvJn0Uk_xx3A/viewform

d. Stipends and Inflation

1. Form submission: BU is only increasing our stipends by 2.5% while inflation has risen to 7.9% in the past 12 months. This essentially means we are taking a paycut of 5.4% next year meaning we're losing \$1357.24 ($=\$25,134 \times 0.054$) in purchasing power assuming inflation stays static at 7.9% and it will be difficult for many of us to survive if inflation keeps raising into next year which is the expectation according to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen. It's going to be hard surviving financially in the one of the most expensive cities in the US and the world for me if BU does not adjust our

stipends according to inflation. My food and housing costs are already arising and BU graduate housing told me my rent will be increasing 8.33% next year. The stipend is suppose to take care of our basic living expenses and yet if it's not adjusted for inflation, it no longer serves that purpose.

2. What can GSO do to advocate for graduate students adversely affected by rising cost of living that outpaces?
 - i. President: Would go to Dean Jeffries-El and Provost Kleinman. We've traditionally done letters of concern and petitions to raise issues
 - ii. Discussion:
 1. Someone reached out to Provost Kleinman in the BU Doctoral Students slack and this was his response: "I very much appreciate that the inflation we are facing creates financial challenges for PhD students, and I am sorry if increased costs mean added anxieties for you and other PhD students. To speak very practically, we set the stipend rate for 2023 in December of 2021, before there was any significant inflation on the horizon. (Note that the merit raises for staff and faculty also did not anticipate the current rate of inflation.)
I wish it were possible to simply increase the stipend rate, but we set all of our other budget parameters around the same time. We have a wide array of obligations, and our budget does not have the flexibility to raise 2023 stipend rates to respond to the current inflation."
 2. President: we could reboot our housing advocacy initiative
 3. [In chat]: Arguably significant inflation has occurred since December d/t the invasion of Ukraine and disruptions to the global markets on things like gas and food, in particular. Also the points about housing are good since many rents are increasing more than normal due to normal raises frozen during COVID.
 4. If administration is inflexible on stipend, are there other costs (such as mandatory student fees) that we could ask to be reduced/eliminated? Are there emergency funds that could be provided to assist graduate students in threat of losing housing?
 5. **Next steps:** GSO will start official inquiry with Dean Kleinman (emphasizing discrepancy between increase in rent versus increase in stipend) to see exactly what situation is and potential avenues of assistance
- e. **MBTA Discount Petitions**
 1. Petition to gain a 50% discount similar to faculty/staff (and graduate students at other Boston-area institutions)
 2. Currently graduate students only get 11% discount

3. Share:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfoQ94xQrI9InJ8pCMOnWabOclBGjPtnoO6wDKD4_Lveq13xg/viewform
- f. **International Student Survey**
 1. Survey about international student experience to be shared:
 2. <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1xritqs2pm353Jkr2ONBiYUWhL1uEpPVr9X75ZBQ8tV4>

VII. Closing:

- a. Contact the GSO at gso@bu.edu
- b. Contact GSO president, Arcadia, at awell1@bu.edu
- c. [Schedule a private meeting with Arcadia](#)

Attendees:

GSO EBoard attending: President, Arcadia Ewell; Vice President, Monan Ma; Secretary, Meghan Townes; Treasurer, Krishna Ammini; Social Chair, Mekhal Raj; International Student Relations Chair, Stan Debruyne; Travel Grants Chair, Josh Fox-Fuller

Attendees: Alicia Matz, Ayshwarya Venkataramana, Curtis M. Snyder, Danni Spencer-Laitt, David Merrick Long, Florian David Bodamer, Guangmei Liu, Jaira Koh, Kangjoon Cho, Keara Sebold, Leping Wang, Maggie Boyd, Makenzie Coker, Maya Chakravorty, Minhyung Kang, Morgan Snoap, Sarah Lewinger,