\*\*\*Hybrid Meeting link:

https://uconn-cmr.webex.com/meet/aes21009

1. **Call to Order:** by Alaa Selim (VP) at 6.08 PM, the meeting started.
2. **Recognition of Senators**
3. **Approval of consent agenda:**
   1. GSS Executive Committee Minutes
      1. *Motion to approve the minutes by Matt, seconded by Amit Matt, Motion passes anonymously.*
   2. GSS Senate Meeting Minutes
      1. *Motion to approve the minutes by Noah, seconded by Matt. Motion passes anonymously.*
4. **Guest Speaker:** Dean Shor – Adjustments to grad internal fellowships
5. Dean Lasley Shor delivered a talk on paid graduate student support and discussed the opportunities available to Graduate students. She talked about the different categories GA's fall in different categories and how their paid work helps in completing the degree. She talked about different scholarships. She talked about the new program (in talks) direct deposit to students in financial aid form. She also talked about to use the money to bring Gas in working conditions which contributes towards degree completion. She also shares her email for reaching out with any questions and discussion.
   * Matt inquired about infrastructure and cost requirements for a new program aimed at aiding students in urgent financial need. Assistant Dean Karen Brushano outlined that they are in the early stages of setting up a program similar to the "Students First Fund," funded by donations and administered by the financial aid office.
   * Karen expressed interest in involving graduate students, especially elected representatives like senators, in the decision-making processes for emergency funding.The university aims to support students facing unexpected financial challenges, such as emergency travel or sudden expenses, rather than ongoing financial needs.
   * Hannah asked about the university’s commitment to diversity if certain fellowships are no longer available. Dean assured that previously awarded fellowships would be honored, with future allocations focused on supporting marginalized and vulnerable populations, though the approach may evolve.
   * Antigony raised concerns about the low enrollment review process and graduate housing. Dean Shor clarified that program reviews are routine at many universities and are not intended as the first step toward eliminating programs. They assured attendees that any necessary “teach-out” plans would ensure students can complete their programs.
   * Dean Shor acknowledged that graduate housing remains an ongoing challenge, with limited university resources to subsidize on-campus housing for graduate students. The university is exploring partnerships with third-party developers to create more affordable housing options in nearby areas, with considerations for locations such as Hartford, Stamford, and Avery Point.
6. **Issues Forum:**
   1. Senator Sandip Roy (senator at large) – Parking issues

Senator Sandip raised concerns about the lack of access and a 60% increase in garage parking fees for the year. He inquired about discussions in the university Senate and any actions from the Graduate Student Senate (GSS).

Alaa Selim mentioned discussions held with the parking and transit committee, highlighting specific areas where additional parking spots, particularly for Area Two, could be allocated. Brian added updates on construction projects, including Mirror Lake, which may affect parking availability.

Senator Brandon explained that the Graduate Employee Union (GEU) believes the parking fee hike violates the union contract, leading them to pursue arbitration with the university.

Senator Sandip questioned if the university has agreed to arbitration, and Brandon clarified that while the arbitration process has been initiated, they are still awaiting an official response. Grace Easterly mentioned that discussions are ongoing with Allison Cuttler to select a mutually agreeable arbitrator. Under the contract, the university must proceed with arbitration.

1. Kelly Schlabach (Social Justice committee - GEU) - Institutional anti-protest policy changes

Urvi (GEU president) and Kelly from the Graduate Employee Union (GEU) Social Justice Committee introduced recent policy changes at UConn, part of a national trend limiting speech and protest rights, including restrictions on amplified sound, outdoor activities, conduct, and media statements. Kelly suggested that the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) consider taking a stance on these policies, inviting the GSS and other groups to join discussions on protecting protest rights and clarifying implications for students' dual roles as both students and employees. Urvi expressed that the policies may infringe on fundamental speech and protest rights.

Cindy raised a concern about ensuring protests remain safe and non-violent, which Urvi acknowledged, stressing the importance of constructive, open dialogue.

Alaa shared that following recent arrests at protests, the GSS, alongside the GEU, has advocated for affected students and is overseeing policy enforcement through the university Senate. Two motions were passed to support this accountability.

1. Kayleigh Morse (Sociology department) – Procedure community concerns

Kayleigh Morse from the Sociology Department raised concerns about the GSS Procedures Committee’s existence and transparency. She highlighted an issue where her application for senator status was rejected without evidence of a proper committee review, leaving her department of 32 students without representation. Kayleigh requested the Senate overturn this ruling, reinstating her and other senators affected by similar issues. Kaylee shared that the committee’s decisions lacked documentation, leading her to question the legitimacy of the committee’s actions. She noted that limiting applications to specific cycles is not mandated by the bylaws and could prevent departments from having representation for up to a year

Alaa Selim acknowledged the concerns and noted that two motions were on the table regarding this issue, which would be discussed in detail. Noah, the parliamentarian and Procedures Committee chair, was given the opportunity to respond, promising a detailed report during his officer report.

1. Urvi Kaul (Social Justice committee - GEU) - GEU presentation

Motion to table the final presentation in issue forum made by Senator Matt and seconded by Senator Sandip, motion passes anonymously.

1. **Executive Board Reports:**
   1. President –Bryan Greene
      1. Bryan Greene, in his role as GSS president and University Senate representative, updated the Senate on recent appointments, including a nomination for an ad hoc committee regarding campus protests. This nomination passed through the university Senate's nominations committee and is now awaiting further reporting.
      2. Bryan mentioned an ongoing two-year budget process expected to be complex, with conversations about proposed fee increases. Preliminary numbers suggest an increase, particularly impacting undergraduates. However, finalized figures for graduate programs and other campuses (e.g., UConn Health and law school) are still pending and should be available in an upcoming town hall meeting.
      3. Bryan noted he has three motions on the agenda related to ongoing Senate concerns and procedural updates. These motions will be addressed later in the meeting, with details provided at that time.
      4. Bryan will be unavailable for the first meeting of the President's Council on Combating Sexual Violence scheduled for Friday at 1:00 p.m. He requested a volunteer to attend as his proxy.
   2. Vice President – Alaa Selim
      1. Alaa announced that the room for meetings has been secured for the entire academic year, resolving previous issues with room availability.
      2. Alaa is actively recruiting members for the Student Life Committee, which currently has no participants. He encouraged anyone interested to join.
      3. Alaa invited senators to bring up any concerns or issues they would like to address, requesting a two-week notice to facilitate planning. He also welcomed suggestions for guest speakers, particularly professors or other individuals who could provide valuable insights relevant to graduate students.
   3. Treasurer- Maham Liqat
      1. Maham presented the amendment GSS budget, which included a new $20,000 special allocation for Tier Two organizations. This allocation was created by reallocating some of the GSS activity funds due to a lack of previously allocated funds for Tier Two organizations and other groups.
      2. Maham explained that without this budget approval, no funds could be distributed to Tier Two organizations, and all Tier Two accounts would remain frozen until the finance committee could review budgets.
      3. Maham noted concerns over potential increases in graduate and undergraduate fees. While the university proposed a $2 increase for GSS, Maham advocated for improved services (e.g., mental health and transportation) instead of fee increases, emphasizing the need for affordable options for students living off-campus without personal transportation.
      4. The budget was outlined with general operational funds, executive committee allowances, wages, activity funds, and the new $20,000 special allocation. Maham emphasized that this budget structure is a temporary solution to support Tier Two organizations until a finance committee is in place.
   4. Motion to take all the votes after Noah’s report made by Sandip seconded by Prakash Ranjan (stand in senator for Quinn Packer)
      1. In Favor: Rest
      2. Nay: 0
      3. Abstain: 3
      4. Motion Passes
   5. Communications Director – Gaurav Gupta
      1. N/A
   6. Activities Director-Leo Gold
      1. N/A
   7. Parliamentarian – Noah Kravette
      1. Noah explained that bylaw amendments require prior notification, as per Article Eight, with amendments needing a preliminary meeting for review before being passed by a two-thirds majority. He outlined that the Procedures Committee must first review any proposed bylaws, after which they are presented to faculty and then brought to the Senate for a final vote.
      2. The Procedures Committee oversees membership verification and credential checks, per Bylaw Seven. This includes checking for proportional representation and active participation among GSS members. Noah noted that ideally, the Procedures Committee would confirm all senators’ applications before the first mandatory meeting, ensuring all applicants meet basic requirements.
      3. Noah acknowledged complaints about a lack of communication regarding application deadlines. He shared an example of a notification sent on September 16 via Soapbox (a university messaging platform). He clarified that, while the Procedures Committee is responsible for bylaw interpretation and application, communication of deadlines falls outside its direct scope, although the committee will review if communication issues impacted applicants’ awareness of deadlines.
      4. The Procedures Committee is currently reviewing appeals from graduate students who missed the deadline, considering whether factors like miscommunication or external obstacles affected their applications. Noah emphasized the committee’s impartiality and commitment to resolving these issues fairly.
      5. **Discussion :**

Several senators raised concerns regarding the transparency and communication practices of the Procedures Committee. Brendan asked why the meeting minutes for the Procedures Committee were not publicly posted, unlike other committee meetings. Noah clarified that, due to website access limitations, he could not post the minutes directly, though he had shared them with the executive board.

Questions were also raised about the selection process for Procedures Committee members. Noah explained that he appointed members based on email requests he received, given the urgent need to establish the committee. Matt, a committee member, introduced himself and noted that the committee included Emma and Sandeep. He acknowledged the oversight in updating the committee information on the GSS website, which was the responsibility of the communications director. The communications director, however, clarified that he could only post information if it was explicitly provided or requested by the relevant committee members, highlighting the need for improved coordination.

Cindy suggested a bylaw amendment allowing senators to introduce themselves at the first meeting, facilitating immediate representation. She noted that such an amendment could address the recurring issue of missed deadlines. Noah referenced Article Three, which requires active constituency status for membership, and noted that the Procedures Committee adheres to these bylaws in making decisions.

Another question arose about the communication process, especially for new committee members who may not have been notified of deadlines. Rahul highlighted that his organization’s new committee members had not received the necessary communications about deadlines. Noah responded that he based his notifications on prior attendance records and email addresses on file, and Emma added that all students had been notified via Soapbox and could access information on the GSS website. Emma also encouraged everyone to communicate respectfully, acknowledging the frustration but suggesting that constructive dialogue would be more beneficial.

The discussion highlighted both procedural concerns and miscommunication, with Noah reiterating that Soapbox remains a valid, if imperfect, tool under UConn and GSS guidelines.

1. Extending the meeting by 30 min made by sandip and seconded by Senator Gaurav Dutta. Motion passes anynomously.
2. **Old Business** - Inventory of All outstanding motions for GSS-TSOS MO
   1. Motion to move all new business to before old business made by senator Sandip seconded by Matt.
3. **New Business**
4. Motion to coordinate Joint Town Halls with GEU on the Proposed Fee Increase,

*Bryan proposed organizing a joint town hall with the Graduate Employee Union (GEU) to address the proposed fee increase before the December Board of Trustees meeting. This would allow graduate students to discuss the budget's impact in detail and unify efforts on essential issues. In response to a question about logistics, Alaa clarified that the event would provide a forum for discussing relevant data and potential impacts on graduate students.*

* Motioned by Emma, seconded by Hannah
* Passed by unanimous aye

1. Motion to approve all GSS Senator applications submitted before October 18, 2024, made by senator Amit and seconded by senator Josh.
   1. *Noah reiterated the necessity of adherence to bylaws and clarified that any vote not in compliance with procedures would be invalid. A subsequent discussion about ensuring procedural compliance highlighted the need for a case-by-case review of applications to maintain transparency without bypassing bylaws. Members raised concerns about the perceived transparency of the Procedures Committee, particularly regarding communication and deadlines*

* Appose: None
* Abstain: 4
* Motion passes.

1. Motion for amendment in the approved budget to shift $20,000 for Tier-ii organization made by Emma and seconded Hanna. Motion passes anonymously.
2. Motion to extend the meeting made by Senator Phuc Pham Seconded by Prakash Ranjan motion passes anonymously.
3. Motion to allocate funds for a "Spooky Pizza Party" for UCONN Graduate Students withdrawn by Leo.
4. Motion approve the amended GSS budget made by Emma and seconded by Hannah, Motion passes anonymously.
5. Motion to table the finance committee approval until the next senate meeting made by Senator Lizu seconded by Senator Amit
   1. In Favor: 7
   2. Oppose: 8
   3. Abstain: none
   4. Motion didn’t pass
6. Motion for finance committee confirmation vote made by Emma seconded by Hannah.
   1. In Favor :10
   2. Nay :7
   3. Abstain: None
   4. Motion passes.
7. Finance committee election,
   1. Names confirmed by VII New Business, motion IV, in Sept 25 GSS Senate meeting minutes from unanimous Senate vote list by email nomination by Oct 28, 2024, 5pm
   2. There was a vacant seat that was filled during election in a 5th GSS Senator seat write-in.
   3. Votes were taken after being passed out to anyone that wanted one in the Senate after the Oct 18th deadline GSS Senator vote.
   4. The Quorum was met with 8 people needed set prior to meeting
   5. Total: 13
      1. Aye: 8
      2. Nay: 0
      3. Abstain: 5
   6. Write in votes:
      1. None: 1
      2. Noah Manuel: 2
   7. Md Amit Hasan: 9
   8. Matt Silverman, Sandip Roy, Cindy Barreto, Joshua Lee and Md. Amit Hasan formed the finance committee.
8. Motion to table all the motions until the next meeting made by Paravel and seconded Phuc motion passes anonymously.
9. Motion to amend by law in relation to meetings held by internal GSS committees to say the following:

* Meetings must have a written record/minutes provided to the Executive Committee and all of the Graduate Student Senate separate from the report given during regular GSS meetings.
* The Chair of the Committee must ensure that the written record/minutes are provided to the GSS Communications Director within 7 days of the meeting in order to be posted to the GSS Website.
* The Chair or their designee can make the written record/minutes for the meeting.

Recommended to put in new business as a recommendation for procedures committee.

1. **Good News**
2. **Adjournment** Motion to adjourn meeting by senator Sandip and seconded by senator Phuck Meeting adjourned at 9.03PM
3. **Atandees**

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