

### Section 1: How GSS Funding Works

- **GSS does not handle funds directly**—all financial transactions go through **TSOS** (University Financial Services).
- GSS submits purchase and payroll requests, which **TSOS reviews** for compliance with **GSS Bylaws, budget approvals, and E-Board and/or Senate votes.**
- **Funding sources:**
  - **Primary:** Graduate activity fee, allocated by the university.
  - **Secondary:** Minimal bank interest.
- GSS budget for an academic year is decided and **voted on by the Senate** in the previous year spring semester.
- As a nonprofit, GSS should try not to carry over a budget from year to year.

### Section 2: Why Funding Was Cut for AY 2023-24

- **Pre-COVID:** GSS faced financial difficulties and considered increasing the graduate activity fee.
- **During COVID:** GSS stopped events and spending, leading to a **reported \$300,000 surplus** on March 2, 2022.
  - However, the surplus was \$250,000 upon this committee's review.
- **Miscalculation:** GSS believed there was a surplus and set the **graduate activity fee to zero** for AY 2022-23. Miscalculation from:
  - Not having a Treasurer.
  - Not considering outstanding TSOS bills.
- **AY 2022-23 School Year Budget:** On Oct 5, 2022, approved \$222,974 budget.
  - High budget because of a believed savings surplus.
  - Increased Tier-II budget because of believed savings.
- After settling **~\$74,000** in unexpected TSOS debts, GSS had **\$169,010**, far below the **\$300,000** originally estimated.
  - GSS was expected to make no money in FY 2022-23.
  - Only had **\$169,010** but was expected to spend **\$222,974**, putting GSS on the brink of bankruptcy.
- **Budget shortfall:**
  - AY 2022-23 budget was set at \$222,974 but lacked enough funds.
  - GSS attempted to reinstate the grad activity fee in Sept 2022, but it was too late for Fall 2022—causing over **50% loss** of income.
  - So, the AY 2023-24 budget was brought to parity pre-COVID budget to \$159,942.16.
- **Dysfunction:** The misunderstanding and misrepresentation of these facts in AY 2023-24 led to major dysfunction within the Senate, resulting in targeted harassment and GSS ultimately abandoning its functions (see next section).
- **By the end of Spring 2024**, no budget was passed for **AY 2024-25**, resulting in a **funding freeze that halted all events and Tier-II support** for the following semester.

- This **continued into Fall 2024** until a new treasurer was elected and unfroze the budget. However, due to the **delays in passing the budget, no Tier-II** events took place in Fall 2024.

### Section 3: Executive Pay Controversy (Summer 2023)

- **GSS approved summer pay for the President and Treasurer (up to 20 hours per week)** to improve officer retention after previous Treasurers and Activities Directors resigned early, causing financial mismanagement.
  - The pay rate for GSS employees, including the President and Treasurer, remained unchanged. The only modification involved an increase in the number of hours and responsibilities assigned to these positions.
  - GSS had open-ended provisions for summer work. The October 2022 Bylaw change introduced hourly caps, and a set pay rate for greater transparency, aligning with USG Bylaws.
- **Proper approvals were obtained:**
  - **Oct 5, 2022** – Senate amended summer pay Bylaw **unanimously**, after discussion.
  - **March 22, 2023** – Senate approved AY 2023-24 budget **unanimously** with **\$12,000 summer pay**.
  - **April 19, 2023** – Senate approved **unanimously** summer hours for President and Treasurer.
  - **May 12, 2023** – E-Board approved **unanimously** specific work hours and pay rate per Bylaws.
  - **Sept 13, 2023** – Senate reviewed summer work by reviewing the E-Board minutes from summer and voted **unanimously** to confirm.
- **The controversy began on October 9, 2023**, when a Senator, who was a former E-Board member from previous year, **misrepresented summer pay increases as improper spending**.
- **A botched Recall attempt was made which violated GSS Policy:**
  - **No within day notice was given** prior (BYLAW IV, Section 2, Clause A).
  - **No policy violation was cited** to initiate Recall (Constitution Article VI, Section 4, Subsection A, Clause ii).
    - All payments followed GSS votes and GSS policy.
  - **Debate focused on pay amounts and hours worked**, rather than potential GSS policy violations of payments (BYLAW IV, Section 1, Clause B).
  - **No closed ballot vote verification** was conducted for proper Recall initiation (Constitution Article VI, Section C).
- **Outcome:** The Recall vote was **procedurally invalid** and based on **faulty information, and misinformation**, rather than **actual violations**. This led to harassment of individual officers, especially then-President. This resulted in the resignation of both the President and the office assistant citing harassment from Senators and E-Board members.

#### **Section 4: Executive Pay Violations (Summer 2024)**

- **Following controversy, BYLAW VI, Clause 3 was amended in Dec 2023 to require all officer payments be made at the end of the semester, removing summer pay.**
- **Despite this, monthly payments were issued without a formal Bylaw change, on April 24, 2024—violating Robert’s Rules of Order.**
- **Past Treasurer and past President paid over the summer in a manner that did not align with the Bylaws.**
- **Bylaw violations in monthly payments:**
  - **BYLAW VI, Clause 5: Officers must attend 75% of E-Board meetings (not met at the time).**
  - **BYLAW VI, Clause 2: Senate must approve stipend eligibility by the third Senate meeting (not met at the time).**
  - **BYLAW VI, Clause 3: Payments must be issued at the end of the semester (ignored).**

#### **Section 5: Recommendations**

1. Fair & Transparent Budgeting – Budgets must be equitable, ensuring balanced allocations for Tier II funding, events, operations, and executive pay.
2. Fee Increase for FY 27 – GSS should deliberate and decide on a graduate activity fee increase in Fall 2025 for implementation in Fall 2026.
3. Eliminate Uncompensated Summer Work – The summer work clause must be removed; officers should not be expected to work without compensation.
4. Refocus on Student Advocacy – GSS must prioritize student wellness and representation, not serve a small minority of graduate students. Past reform efforts have faced hostility, leading to harassment and officer resignations.
5. Ensure FERPA Compliance – GSS must protect privacy, ensuring personnel discussions occur in closed-door or executive sessions.
6. Follow Bylaws & Procedures – GSS Bylaws are directives, not suggestions, and must be fully followed, including parliamentary procedures.
7. Commit to Transparency & Due Process – GSS must be open, democratic, and transparent, allowing full deliberation before making decisions, while upholding due process for officers and members.

#### **Section 6: Conclusions**

The Financial Investigation Committee finds that GSS overspent on events and Tier-II funding in AY 2022-23 while suspending its only source of income. This happened due to a misunderstanding of what funds it had on hand, due to GSS not having a treasurer in the previous school year (when budgets were made). Due to the failure to raise Graduate Student Activity Fee

the following year, GSS was forced to spend money that it earns (with minimal savings). This led to the budget being brought back to pre-COVID levels.

The committee acknowledges the mistakes made by the Senate in AY 2023-24, where misunderstandings and misinformation about what happened to GSS finances, led to confusion about distribution of GSS budget and summer payments of 2023. While we recognize that most Senators were new and lacked prior context, it seems that some individuals deliberately created a situation that resulted in the harassment of a single officer.

The committee strongly condemns all misinformation and targeted harassment campaigns against officers or the office assistant. **The summer 2023 payments followed all GSS policies and was unanimously voted in by the Senate, and E-Board. Thus, on behalf of the Senate we apologize to those who were harassed for the summer 2023 payments, especially Sandip Roy, the then-President of GSS during summer and Fall 2023.**

**Moving forward, while we acknowledge that summer 2024 payments for the new slate of officers (different from Summer 2023 officers) did not follow Bylaws, we do not hold any individuals personally responsible for summer 2024 payments. This was a procedural error caused by a lack of oversight, not intentional misconduct.**

Finally, the events of the past two years at GSS underscore the critical importance of democratic norms, due process, and adherence to the organization's governing documents—all upheld through proper parliamentary procedures.