GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE
University of Connecticut
Executive Committee Meeting
October 3, 2025 | 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Student Union 213 (GSS Office)

Attendance: Sandip Roy (President), Leo Gold (VP), Noah Kravette (Comms.), Medha Arora (Activities Director), Kari Comstock (Parliamentarian), Graduate Student Trustee (Fabio), Nick Lanza (Office Assistant), and Neha Praveen (Office Assistant).

1. **Call to Order - 17:11**
2. **Executive Committee Report**
    a. Graduate Student Trustee (Fabio)
        i. The state is separately funding a Waterbury hospital for $390 million over the next 5 years, and UConn Health is funding $21 million from its own budget to be added to UConn Health. This will not affect graduate students or UConn funding.
    b. President (Sandip)
        i. University
            1. Hired a consulting firm to investigate efficiencies in non-academic departments. Do you need X number of employees or certain work being done for the entire system to function?
            2. The university has been hiring more people than needed at certain times, and it seems that some non-academic staff may be let go.
            3. UConn was planning to require an anti-Black racism course, but due to the current political climate, it will now be optional.
            4. Updating the policy on scooter regulations.
            5. The University Planning Committee is looking into key card access for all buildings.
        ii. International Students
            1. There has been a 30% drop in international graduate students compared to last year, with the largest decline from India. This trend is expected to worsen, so the university is exploring ways to attract more international students.
            2. The university is also trying to help students navigate the federal 4-year visa maximum. They are monitoring related federal policies to determine how best to retain and attract international students. There are no updates on this now.
        iii. Travel policy
            1. The university has changed its travel policy, which impacts graduate students attending conferences. This applies to all funding sources—including individual research, donor funds, endowments, and not just state, federal, or school funds. It also includes PI discretionary funding.
            2. Under the new policy, the university now requires that students must be actively presenting to attend a conference. This may affect graduate student participation and visibility at conferences.

3. The university is also stating that students may not attend job market conferences. However, attending these conferences contributes to the university's overall rankings.
    a. Fabio: All of this appears to be a result of the budget cuts. We could potentially bring this up with the new Vice President for Research.
    b. Sandip: This funding issue isn't coming from UConn's direct budget, but rather from sources outside the university's core funding--which is why it's causing so much confusion within departments and schools. President Radenka has stated that UConn is a research university first, and that none of these funding changes should affect research. Initially, we were told that Deans had full control over their own funding and that there was no centralized oversight. However, parts of the university are now asserting control and rejecting travel requests. This is impacting all types of travel.

iv. Budget mysteries
1. Tuition, fees, state funding, and other revenue sources have all increased year over year, so it's unclear where the budget shortfall is coming from.
2. The University Budget Committee is currently reviewing the expense side to identify the issue.

c. Vice-President
i. Senate meetings
1. Operations are much more refined and controlled compared to the last two years.
2. We have transitioned to a fully in-person format, with the only exception being branch-campus Senators, who may continue to participate online.
3. Senators are always welcome to send an alternate if needed, but meetings will now always be held in person.
4. We are working to establish standing rules in the Senate to improve parliamentary procedures and decorum. This is currently under review by the Procedures Committee, and we will provide updates soon.
5. Any motion intended for the Senate should be submitted by E-Board members at least 72 hours in advance. If something arises after that deadline, please contact Leo directly to request that the Senate or individual Senators introduce a motion to add it to the

agenda. E-Board members will not be allowed to directly solicit motions randomly from the Senate.

ii. University
   1. We are looking into tuition and fee committees to identify opportunities for graduate student involvement, including through the SEC. Our goal is to ensure graduate student representation on the most impactful of these committees, as their decisions have direct downstream effects on graduate education.
   2. The university is exploring non-bus transportation options for students in need--particularly graduate students--by potentially offering Uber credits to improve access to and from UConn. This initiative is aimed at supporting students without cars, especially international students.

d. Treasurer (vacant)
   i. Budget and ICR issues
      1. FY26 draft budget shows a continued deficit ($1.78B revenue vs. $1.84B expenses).
      2. Tuition and auxiliary revenues are up; state funding remains unstable.
      3. ICR (F&A) distribution still undecided — concerns about impacts on early-career faculty.
   ii. Finance Tasks and Deadline
      1. Treasurer reimbursements, Kathmandu PR invoices, and fellowship recipient lists are pending (Nick to complete).
      2. SASFAC budget packets due Oct 10; final approval by Dec 12.
      3. PR issues require correct invoice uploads and coordination with TSOS on HuskyBuy receipts.
   iii. Action items
      1. Oct 10 meeting with David Clokey on MOU and budget alignment.
      2. Clarify emergency loan processing with Grad School and Krista.
      3. Develop ICR advocacy points ahead of SASFAC.

e. Communications Director
   i. Maintaining documentation and minutes for both the Senate and E-Board, along with managing marketing efforts via Instagram, WhatsApp, and email.
   ii. Creating a separate ListServ specifically for fee-paying graduate students.
   iii. Coordinating with SHAW to organize the Wellness Wednesday event on October 22.
   iv. Collaborating with Sandip to send out an email regarding the composite fee.

      v. Working with Kari and Maham to draft an email to Senators--and possibly all graduate students--encouraging participation in the upcoming Finance Committee elections.
   f. Activities Director
      i. An anonymous survey was sent out after the September 20 Kathmandu event.
      ii. We are having a fall outdoor activity, husky Halloween party, and some other events upcoming. These include two upcoming Fall events. One with Grad Social Club (GSC) on the 18th and one with an outdoor Coffee Hour on the 24th of October.
      iii. We are looking to make a professional development event with different departments on a tentative date Friday, Jan 30, 2026, from 2 – 4 PM. Afterwards students can come to Coffee Hour!
   g. Parliamentarian
      i. Met with procedures committee to discuss a few things
         1. Clarifying reimbursement policies (e.g., parking).
         2. Ongoing discussions on eligibility requirements for holding office, aimed at reducing turnover and improving role clarity.
         3. Sandip noted past cases where individuals remained in positions all year without contributing (e.g., Activities Director four years ago).
         4. Clarifying who can speak during Senate meetings and when based on Senate standing rules and coordination with the VP.
         5. Proposal to allow a 2/3 vote of remaining E-Board members to fill vacant positions during summer resignations.
         6. General cleanup of standing rules, including typo fixes.
      ii. Attending Graduate Faculty Committee
         1. Working to establish a workflow that supports graduate students across various courses.
         2. Creating a Graduate Financial Committee (GFC) and other committees focused on financial support and academic governance.
         3. Exploring the reopening of graduate student fellowship grant applications.

3. Old Business
   a. Discussion: September Event at Kathmandu
      i. Sandip: For all general purposes the September 20 event failed. We are looking to make ways to make sure this does not happen again.
      ii. Medha: I sent out a survey to find out what to do next time. We have found timing and days are the most important. It seemed that the day and lateness of the day is what caused failure.
         1. Types of events that people want is social mingling.

2. Also, people are interested in professional development.
3. 9 PM to 1 AM on a Saturday seemed like a poor time to have an event. So, 4 – 8 PM Fridays seems like the best time.

iii. Noah: It seems that professional, wellness, and orientation events brought in the most unique faces--many of whom stayed and carried that momentum into other events.

iv. Sandip: We may need to create simpler and more direct marketing: where and when matter most. We should also make sure the posters are clearer and more straightforward.

v. Kari: I think the posters may have been a little too pink.

vi. Sandip: I think people are getting confused somewhere along the way, and we need to simplify things.

b. Budget for AY 2025-26 events

i. Medha: $5,000 requested for the Holi Celebration.

ii. Sandip: This is not coming out of the Special Allocations fund, but from our activities fund. We still have $7,000 remaining in Special Allocations. After covering the cost of the Huskies event, we won't have any other major expenses from the Activities budget for the rest of the semester. We should have around $22,000–$23,000 left.

iii. Sandip: Our total Activities budget is $49,000. We also have about $5,000 in the Tier-II budget from groups not sending Senators to GSS or dropping out.

4. **New Business**

a. **Motion**: Schedule emergency E-Board meeting TBD for the thirst two discussion points (motion by Sandip, seconded by Leo).

i. Motion passes unanimously.

~~b. Discussion: E-Board duties and roles~~

~~c. Discussion: E-Board roles in the senate meetings~~

d. Discussion: Fee increase

i. The Senate has voted to increase the Graduate Student Activity Fee from $16 per semester to $28 per semester. We are now working to collect signatures and present this proposal to the committee for approval.

ii. Fabio: When presenting to the committee, make sure to highlight all your expenditures and clearly explain what graduate students need. Also, be sure to mention the role of TSOS.

e. Discussion: GSS portion of comprehensive fees

i. There are student fees within comprehensive programs that do not go to GSS at all for graduate students.

- ii. Sandip: According to policy, portions of these comprehensive fees should be allocated to GSS for graduate students.
  1. Note: Excluding online programs, GSS is missing approximately $73,760 from comprehensive fee-paying programs. When comparing all comprehensive fee-paying students to those paying the Graduate Student Activity Fee, 43.9% of graduate students are not represented by or able to benefit from GSS.

f. Discussion: SASFAC package

g. Discussion: TSOS Fee
- i. Sandip: Fabio, when you were in USG, was there a TSOS fee?
- ii. Fabio: There was none and there is no due diligence because you don't know what you are paying for or the service you get exactly. No, there wasn't. What are the services you get from the fee?
- iii. Medha: Before 2019, they were funded directly by the university.
- iv. Fabio: I would ask: 1) Why was this fee introduced? 2) What specific services are being provided? 3) What is the hourly rate, and how is that number determined? 4) What happens if a group can't or doesn't pay the fee? 5) What's the actual difference in service between paying this fee and not paying it?
- v. Sandip: Per university policy, reimbursements are not permitted. TSOS must generate and process the purchase orders directly.
- vi. Nick: We've also had PRs returned multiple times--sometimes for different reasons, sometimes for the same ones. It feels like there's an incentive to keep rejecting them.
- vii. Fabio: I'd recommend setting up a direct meeting with TSOS to have a transparent conversation. The budget comes from student fees meant to support student experiences, it's difficult to justify so much being spent on administrative handling.
- viii. Leo: I'll be bringing this up at the next USEC meeting. From there, we can recommend it for review by the Senate Student Life Committee.

h. Vote: TSOS Bills
- i. Bills not presented to E-Board yet.

i. Vote: October Events.
- i. Huskies Halloween
  1. **Motion**: Up to $9,000 for Huskie's event for 250 people. (By Sandip, seconded by Leo).
     a. Motion passes unanimously.

2. Motion: Gift cards for $50, $40, $30 for Halloween costume contest as prize for UConn Bookstore (By Medha, seconded by Sandip).
    a. Motion passes unanimously.
3. **Motion**: Up to buy $100 in supplies for the Huskies Halloween (By Medha, seconded by Leo).
    a. Motion passes unanimously.

ii. Halloween office decoration supplies
1. **Motion**: Up to $150 in Halloween office decoration supplies (by Medha, seconded by Sandip).
    a. Motion passes unanimously.

iii. Outdoor coffee hour
1. **Motion**: Up to $200 additional for outdoor coffee hour (by Medha, seconded by Kari).
    a. Motion passes unanimously

iv. Outdoor day
1. No PRs.

5. Good News

6. Adjournment – 19:14 meeting closes via unanimous consent.