

GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE

What is GSS?

GSS is an assembly of graduate students representing all academic departments and certain non-academic constituencies, such as the Graduate Students of Colour Association. GSS meets 5 times a semester to discuss graduate issues and decide how to take action to promote those interests. It is open to all members of the public, and all graduate students can attend and speak at the meeting.

Who are the GSS Executive Board?

Every year GSS Senators elect the GSS Executive Board which consists of 5 Executive Officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Parliamentarian, Activities Director, and Communications Director). The Executive Board work to help graduate students at UConn, and chair the GSS meetings, where they hear about graduate concerns, share information, and explain their activities and plans.

Who funds GSS?

Masters and doctoral students pay the Graduate Student Activity fee of \$16 per semester to fund the activities of GSS.

What do you do with that funding?

We provide funding to Tier-II Graduate Student Organisations, we hold social and professional development events for graduates, we ensure that graduate voices and interests are heard and respected throughout the university in all relevant areas, and we ensure our activities are carried out in a democratic, accountable and transparent manner.

What has GSS done for me lately?

- We have ensured **graduate voices are heard**
  - We have supported various campaigns
    - We passed resolutions defending the library against cuts and defending the UConn Coop from corporate takeover.
    - At the next GSS meeting we are voting to support a sustainable divestments initiative to ensure the UConn Foundation invests in renewable energies.
    - We continually campaign for better public transport, parking, housing and healthcare for graduates.
    - We have had senators from cultural constituencies serve on the search committee for UConn's Chief Diversity Officer to ensure the university has a genuine commitment to increasing diversity.

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- We have elected graduate students to sit on 12 university committees, and additionally our Executive Officers currently sit on 8 committees. Please see here for more information: <http://gss.uconn.edu/external-committees/>
- We have fostered strong relationships and open communications with relevant organisations such as the Graduate School, the Graduate Employee Union (GEU-UAW), the Association of Graduate Advocates (AGA), and the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) to promote the interests of all graduate students across the university and to work with our partners to make UConn better for all graduates.
- We have invited guest speakers to address the GSS at meetings and to hear feedback from graduates. This year we have hosted:
  - Kent Holsinger, Dean of the Graduate School
  - Jim Wohl, University Ombuds Officer
  - Victoria Blodgett, Assistant Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
  - Ross Dandini, Graduate Student Senate Administrator
  - Matthew Dunn, Centre of Entrepreneurship and Innovation
  - Patrick Carr, Associate University Librarian for Collections and Discovery
  - Kay Gruder, Career Consultant to the Graduate School.

At the next GSS meeting we are having two guest speakers:

- Tanya Husick, UConn Transportation Planner, and
- Martha Bedard, Vice Provost of University Libraries.

At the final GSS meeting our guest speaker is:

- Scott Jordan, Executive Vice President for Student Affairs and Chief Financial Officer, to speak.

- We have held **social events**

- We have helped build a university wide graduate community by holding popular events such as the Food Truck Festival (800+ attendees), Halloween (400+ attendees), Thanksgiving (600+ attendees), and Grad Prom (400+ attendees).
- We have also held biweekly Happy Hours at the Nathan Hale Inn's True Blue Tavern, Ted's Restaurant and Bar, and Dog Lane Café. By the end of this semester we will have held a total of 8 Happy Hours!
- We have collaborated with the Graduate Initiative Fellows (GIFs), Graduate Students of Color Association (GSCA), Student Association of Graduate Engineers (SAGE), and other Graduate Student Organizations (GSOs) to hold social activities ranging from comedy nights to Halloween parties.
- We are due to hold our first joint social event with Connecticut Young Professionals at Dave and Busters in Manchester, 6-8pm, Thursday 31st March, combining both social and professional events.

- We have held **professional development events**

- We have helped graduates prepare for a successful career after their degrees. We have worked with the Centre for Career Development and the Graduate School to hold public speaking workshops and career talks. See here for more information: <http://career.uconn.edu/graduate-students/>

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- We have partnered with the Connecticut Young Professionals, a state-wide network of professionals aged 21-40 already partnered with Yale University, to help graduates connect with young professionals in the state, and enable UConn graduates to increase local economic activity, community engagement and improve the overall quality of life in Connecticut. See here for more information: <http://ctyp.org/>
- We have allocated **money to Graduate Student Organisations (GSOs)**
  - We have allocated over \$50,000 to Tier-II GSOs
  - We have also allocated almost \$10,000 in Special Allocations this year 2015-16 to GSO's for various events such as Graduate Writing Retreats, Career Talks, Speaker Series, Academic Roundtables, Film Series, and Cultural Events.
- We have **supported individual graduates in need**
  - We have provided Short Term Loans to help individual graduate students facing cash flow difficulties. We give out over 100 short term loans per year, totalling ~\$150,000, to support graduates.
  - We provide representation to any graduate students dealing with the university Community Standards process.
- We have ensured GSS's organisational **accessibility, accountability and transparency.**
  - GSS meetings are now telecast online and accessible for all graduate students including those at regional campuses.
  - All meeting minutes are uploaded onto the GSS website in accordance with Freedom of Information Act regulations.
  - We have made changes to our Bylaws and Constitution to streamline GSS meetings to ensure plenty of time for graduate attendees to voice their concerns to the graduate body.

We encourage all graduates to attend and find out what GSS does for yourselves!

Regards,

The GSS Executive Board 2015-16

- *President Tony Patelunas*
- *Vice President Michelle San Pedro*
- *Treasurer Greg Treich*
- *Activities Director Morad Behandish*
- *Parliamentarian Phillip Price*
- *Communications Director Thomas Briggs*