



The senate chair called the meeting to order at 05:30 pm.

Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes

Augustine Attah: I move a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 11/18/2024.

Nazua Idris: I Second

Vote Count:

- **Yes:** 49
- **No:** 0
- **Abstain:** 0

Marwa Aly: We have reached the majority, and the motion passes.

Approval of the Agenda

Edmund Larbi Afari: I move a motion to approve the agenda for today's meeting.

Joseph Siaw Akowuah: I Second

Vote Count:

- **Yes:** 49
- **No:** 0
- **Abstain:** 0

Marwa Aly: We have reached the majority, and the motion passes.

05:35 | New Business

- VP Candidates Speech (5 mins each) and voting
 - Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye, Senator-at-Large of the College of Veterinary Medicine (Neuroscience)
 - **Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye:** First, I want to thank Marwa. I joined GPSA 2 years ago, and she was the VP by then and the work she does, together with the Communications Director is always superb. I think that for anybody who wants to assume the position of VP, following Marwa's steps will be the best way to go, and if I'm elected as the next VP, I'm going to work hard to mimic Marwa's great successes. I will also use my own intuition to build on some of the things that we could do to grow our association. I have met with Marwa already, we have discussed how things could be better and how we could work together to ensure that next semester flows seamlessly, as it is going to be a new experience for me. I also trust that some of the senior senators here are going to be available to assist me when I need any help, especially the current committee chairs



who definitely know things that I may not be aware of yet. If you elect me, I'm going to be committed like I have been in GPSA for the past 2 years, and I'll ensure that our Senate meetings and our budgets reflect the good work that the GPSA leadership does and wants to do for its members. Thank you so much for your time.

- **Haden Kingrey:** Just to your points about you talking with Marwa and seeing how there are areas where you think there can be improvements. I was curious if you could share what those conversations were and what those potential improvements might be.
- **Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye:** In my opinion and as a senator, one thing I've realized is that the positions in GPSA are not very competitive, vacancies usually attract numerous applications where I come from, and one of the reasons is that people who are, for instance, Senators, already get the opportunity to practice what the Vice President does, like leading senate meetings, so it gives you an experience of what the VP is and naturally you would want to take up the position when it becomes vacant because you've done it before you know you can do it. But these are some of the areas we hope that we can encourage more people, not only for GPSA positions but also for all the other GPSA activities, to get more people involved.
- **Tathagata Pal:** As you may know, the VP position also becomes the chair of the Budget Committee, and as a matter of fact, enrollment is down and that is directly tied to the amount of S&A Money we may receive. So how do you think you can tackle the budget cuts GPSA may receive during the upcoming year?
- **Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye:** If you remember, during the budget approval discussion for RSOs and Committees, I mentioned two key things I believe could save us some money; 1st of all, associations that are within for instance, the same department and mostly run the same activity can be combined so that we have one RSO organizing the activity not only to save some money, but also to improve participation, since it is the same students who are members of both. The second approach will be towards the activities GPSA runs, sometimes different committees run similar activities that may cross up with each other. In the end, it's all the same people, so we can fuse some



of these activities together, so that once again we are not only saving money but also increase participation.

- **Destiny Brokaw:** This is a little bit of a hard question. You were the VP of our departmental group, and it was not the best time. I know you felt that you didn't feel heard so you dropped out on us halfway through the semester. So if you were to come across that in GPSA and you had some retaliation or felt you weren't being heard. Would you also step back? And how would that affect GPSA as a whole?
- **Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye:** I believe that's the point of leadership; you need to know what you can do and what you can't. And if you can't be effective, why are you even in that position? For me, it's not only about being in positions, if I can't help, because usually I come up with different ideas and ways of doing things so if I'm not being heard, which also mean that I cannot be effective in that position, I will resign. I don't want to be there because I am occupying that position, I want to be an effective leader, that is my policy.
- **Arpita Sinha:** Thank you for stepping into this role at this point because we needed someone to fill this role. So thank you for that. My question is not only for you but also for the Senate in general to brainstorm. But you can just put in thoughts if you're willing to. Right at the beginning of spring, as you assume your role, that is when we start planning for our upcoming elections for the next term and by the bylaws, the President and the Vice President must contest together, do you have any ideas to encourage more people to come together to contest? So that we don't get uncontested positions? We would want to see more people getting involved.
- **Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye:** Well, as you said, this is for the senate to discuss so I'm just going to leave that one hanging for anybody who wants to comment on it. I believe this is individual decisions, senators, or even I think that's also open to the whole GPSA, anyone who interest should please start working together towards that.
- **Augustine Attah:** Being the VP, as you may know, is a combination of many things; besides presiding over Senate meetings you're also the chair for the Budget Committee and you may also serve as a member of different committees.



Looking at where you are right now in your PhD and the sensitivity of this position, how do you think that will affect your performance as the VP? Because I can tell you it's going to be time sensitive, and when I listened to your talk with the other contestant last time, in my opinion, I think what affected you a little bit was your inability to go to Olympia to stay there because of your engagement in the lab and I see that you're doing a lot of hands-on research in the lab. So how are you going to reassure us that when we need you to respond timely, you're going to do that?

- **Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye:** First of all, many thanks to James and everyone who nominated me for the second time. I believe it worked out in my favor. As the VP, I don't have to go to Olympia, right? But also, current I'm a teaching assistant, which takes 20 hours of my time in a week. Becoming the vice president will release me of that responsibility, so I can dedicate that time towards this position.
- **Madison Hönig:** My question is, we've gotten a lot of calls from both the Senate and the college representatives about increasing the level of transparency, particularly as it pertains to decision-making at the top executive level. Between the President, VP, and VPLA, people are asking for more transparency. I want to know what you envision your role as VP being in addressing some of those concerns. Given that oftentimes you need to make decisions in between our Senate meetings, what is your vision to collaborate with all the levels of leadership within GPSA.
- **Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye:** That's a tough question because it is important to note that I am not the President, so, even though I am in that meeting, I am not the chair of that executive board. However, I think that what I can say is that during such committee meetings, for instance, when it comes to budgets, it's not only my decision, so even though you have the chairperson's voice, you still don't automatically make all the decision it has to be discussed between the committee members and the members are not specifically selected by the VP, some members on the board automatic members, including our advisor. So, in a case like that, you can be assured that the decision is not coming from any one person's point of view.



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- **Andrew Sutherland:** My question is for Ajay. What was the rationale for nominating Desmond as VP for GPSA?
- **Ajay Barman:** He showed enthusiasm and interest in GPSA work, and I trust him, and he will put in good work for the GPSA and VP position. The position is very important, because this is the role that handle a lot of the background work that needs to be done for GPSA to function, including serving the RSOs, serving all the senators, scholarships, and our senate meeting and I think there are lots of positives about how Desmond has showed his interest in this role and his commitment to the GPSA. I strongly believe that he will do his due diligence for the GPSA.
- **Marwa Aly:** Now, we need to hear a motion.
- **Joseph Siaw Akowuah:** I motion to vote on Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye as the next GPSA VP.
- **James Asare:** I Second.
- **Tathagata Pal:** Just make sure that everyone knows that we are voting for the VP position.
- **Madison Hönig:** I would like just some clarity on the transition timeline.
- **Marwa Aly:** I will be VP until December 31st and then we will transition to the new VP.
- **Andrew Sutherland:** I need more clarity on what specific qualifications make Desmond qualified to be the GPSA VP because your previous answer was very broad. What specific skills or qualifications does he have?
- **Ajay Barman:** We need a VP for next semester, otherwise many of GPSA's work will be halted. Our S&A presentation is coming up, which will fund our association for the next year, and we need someone as a budget committee chair, as a vice president of GPSA to be there in the presentation and ask for money for us. But it is important to note that we don't want someone just to fill up the position we need someone who will be capable to do the job. Last year, I attended the School of Biological Sciences Science Symposium, and during that time, Desmond was the vice president and the person who organized the symposium on behalf of the BGSA, I saw how hard he worked, and everything he did during that symposium was so up to a point, and it was so successful. And he has been part of GPSA for more than a



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year, and he has showed his commitment to the GPSA also. If you attended all the Senate meetings, you have seen him during senate discussions, including when we have guests, he is one of the people who will asking most of the right questions, being the voice of our graduate students, and we need someone like him who can be in the VP position and who can be the voice of the students. So that's why I believe he showed his commitment to the GPSA to be the next Vice President. I also talked with Marwa, and she assured me that when he had a responsibility meeting with his as a potential candidate, he showed enough interest and capability to be the next VP.

- **Joseph Siaw Akowuah:** Desmond is one of my committee members, so I can vouch for him because I'm currently working with him. He is very diligent, and even as I nominated him for this position, I was also very worried that one of the most hardworking people on my committee will be leaving. I think that he is up for the task, he's demonstrated it already on my committee.
- **Zahra Khodaverdi:** I don't have a question, just a clarification, did we have any other candidates who were willing to take all of this responsibility, or Desmond was the only one?
- **Ajay Barman:** So, at this point, Desmond is the only capable candidate that we have, and we have almost a month with Marwa to have a proper transition so that Marwa can teach our upcoming vice President how to do their job and they will have like a proper timeline almost a month before our semester is over. I am confident that if Desmond has enough time with Marwa, he's capable enough to learn what he needs to do for the upcoming semester.
- **Vote on the Approval of Desmond Nanayaw Aboagye as VP.**
 - **Yes: 41**
 - **No: 8**
 - **Abstain: 4**
- **Marwa Aly:** We have reached the majority, and the motion passes. Desmond has been elected as the next vice president for the GPSA, congratulations Desmond.
- Senator-at-large for the EECS application, candidate speech, and voting
 - **Nazua Idris:** The senator-at-large position for the EECS became vacant after



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Ali Maleki, current Senator of the EECS, was elected as the new VPLA. Please note that the new VPLA and the new senator-at-large for the EECS will assume their roles in Spring 2025.

- **Elina Parajuli**, first-year PhD student in the EECS
 - Hello, everyone my name is Elina, and I am a 1st year PhD student in the department of electrical engineering. I am currently engaged in the department as a committee member of the Nepalese Student Association, and during my time, we have already organized about 4 cultural events, and we are trying to promote cultural diversity among the campus community. During my undergraduate studies, as well as during my master's degree, back in my country Nepal, I was engaged in several student associations and has developed leadership experience, as well as tried to be as involved in activities that aimed at making a difference. I recognize that even small issues, such as inadequate lunch spaces or restroom supplies, can significantly impact our lives as graduate students so, in my capacity as a senator, I will try to address these challenges for international students. It is very overwhelming for them. Whether it be navigating housing, health care, or some other essential resources. To address this issue, I propose creating a comprehensive handbook that includes all the links and resources that can be helpful for them and ensure a smoother transition due to our rigorous academic schedule. We need to take care of our mental health as well. So, for mental well-being, I will advocate for a relaxation zone where we can all connect over board games or escape from our research pressure, and we can also conduct some mental health workshops as well. So this is me, and I am here to represent our voice and try to create an inclusive, and supportive community through GPSA.
- **Hassan Yazdani**, a third-year PhD student in the EECS
 - Hi, everyone. My name is Hassan, and I'm a PhD student in the electrical engineering department. I research renewable energy. I'm originally from Iran, and during my undergrad, I was a member of a student association that we had over there. And one of my best memories is when we arranged various events over there with my friends. For example, I had orientation session meetings for the incoming students and many field trips that I was involved in arranging. As a new member of the GPSA



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and as someone who has been living here for 3 years in Pullman, I am aware of many issues that my fellow graduate students are dealing with, specifically the issue of housing or healthcare that I have some experiences that I want to bring those experiences here and create some conversations about finding solutions together.

➤ Discussions:

- **Augustine Attah:** Hassan, you mentioned that you were going to start the conversation about fixing housing, how do you intend to fix housing?
- **Hassan Yazdani:** Well, in my experience, for example, if you bring up some issues to the housing people, they usually either refer you to someone else or don't give a clear answer about how to solve issues. So, we must gather around and make our words heard, to communicate to them clearly what our issues are. For example, I had some issues regarding housing where I was waiting so long to get housing from the University, and it was not possible, and nobody was responding to me, or when I was residing in the University housing, there were some issues regarding, for example the garbage disposal or recycling bins. I asked them to install them, but I got no response from them. I just got CC'd and forwarded to different people, and no solutions. These are some issues that I observed, and can be good to start the conversation, I'm sure that after that, we will come up with solutions.
- **Zahra Khodaverdi:** Hi Elina, what campus are you on?
- **Elina Parajuli:** I am a Pullman Student.
- **Zahra Khodaverdi:** Hello Hassan, do you have any ideas on reducing stress within your department?
- **Hassan Yazdani:** I think the best way is to bring up the potential resources that are available to them.
- **Edmund Larbi Afari:** This question is to both Elena and Hassan. Do you know the primary roles of a Senator? Because I heard some things that truthfully, as much as it's very ambitious, it's not in your capacity to address them. For instance, fixing housing issues, as a Senator for a department that's not your capacity. So, do you know the primary roles of a Senator?
- **Elina Parajuli:** Thank you for the question. I think the



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primary responsibility of a Senator is to bring the issues that the students of our department, or any graduate student faces out to the senate and try to solve it through GPSA, as we can solve it better as a team rather than individually. And some of the issues that I pointed out, like the issues of not having proper lunch spaces or improper restroom facilities, I think we can have some discussion with the chairpersons of the respective department and can solve it so I think, even with the position of Senator. We can do it if we work as a team.

- **Hassan Yazdani:** I know that, for example, although I know the name implies that a senator might have a lot of legislative authority, but they do not. As I've heard from some of my friends who have served in similar positions. They usually run surveys, for example, to realize what the issues are, what the consensus is among students, and what should be highlighted, talked about, and dealt with.
 - **Ali Maleki:** Are you familiar with the roles and responsibilities you will have with the University Affairs Committee?
 - **Hassan Yazdani:** No, I am not familiar, but I have read the email with the description.
 - **Elina Parajuli:** No, I am not familiar, but I have read the email with the description.
 - **Golrokh Rose Maleki:** I'd like to mention that they don't necessarily know anything about the university affairs right now, but it is our responsibility to provide enough information and help them and provide mentoring for them so that they know what we do. So please do not judge them based on the big dreams that they have about fixing things. In my experience, we need people who are ambitious in our university committees.
- **Madison Hönig:** I move a motion to vote on the EECS Senator-at-Large.
 - **Nazua Idris:** I Second.
 - **Vote on who should be the Senator-at-Large for the EECS**



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- Elina Parajuli: 31
 - Hassan Yazdani: 19
 - Abstain: 2
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- 06:00 | Dinner break
 - 06:20 | New Business
 - RSO spring fund.
 - **Marwa Aly:** The spring Affiliate fund for RSOs, so GPSA for the Spring Affiliate Fund. We received, as you see, many applications, I think, 20. How many? Yeah. 24 applications. Sorry. I'm very bad at counting. And we had 1, 2, 3, 4 of them that were rejected. They were rejected because they didn't have an active website on the cook presence, and this is one of the mandatory steps to be a registered organization. And then we have American society. They were rejected because they already received 1,800 in the fall, and then the minimum that they can receive is 300. The total combination between the 2 semesters is 2,000. So that means we can give them the 200, the rest, and then we have the College of Veterinary and the history, and these two will be reconsidered, as I believe, because they entered or we received the wrong entry from them, related to the number of their members and the number, the total members, and the number of graduates and proficient students in their organization. They shared the correct numbers and related that the GPSA Committee Budget Committee would revise the decision for their application. Other than that today we didn't have any RSO. To present their plan, because of no RSO. Receive will receive more than 1,000 or more. First, the budget is very limited. So we couldn't give the 1,000 to anyone, and we would like to keep all of them active. We would like to give money to everyone, you know, and second, the flow of applications was very high. With this, I would conclude that the affiliate fund for RSOs, a total of \$42,000 for the academic year 2425, is split as follows for fall 2024: we had 22 RSOs, with a total fund of \$22,225. We had four sponsorship applications in full, with a total of \$3,950, and then for spring, we have 24 RSOs, with a total of 14,000 14,700. So the summary from this is that we still have that GPSA Budget committee will revise their application, and all the funds 5 \$50 or more that were not spent after December 10th from the fall, or the sponsorship fund will be retrieved to the Budget Committee, and then we can use it again for the sponsorship applications for spring.
 - **Andrew Sutherland:** What organization is the Washington State University?
 - **Marwa Aly:** That would be the CommGrad, and they just kept putting Washington State University.
 - **Andrew Sutherland:** Well, that is embarrassing because I am the VP of that organization. I will talk to our Treasure about that.
 - Appreciation session.
 - **Marwa Aly:** Thank you to GPSA, and I will start if you give me the space for this. And this is my last official meeting with GPSA, and it's my 4th year. I have



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a motion with GPSA. GPSA supported me and my family. I gave them space in my life, and they gave me support, they financially supported my family, and they gave me the chance to prove myself. They gave me the chance to say I can do something as an international woman, as an international student, and as a single mom, I was able to prove myself. And today, as I am here now, Monday is my final defense. So please hope me the best. Thank you. Thank you so much. And then, by the last week of December, I am moving out to Minnesota. I got a position there, and I will say Thank you. I am keeping myself from crying. So please be patient with me. Yeah. So I would say that. The 1st item they looked at. My resume was not my scientific background, but it was my leadership experience. So, I appreciate all the experience that I get from GPSA. Everyone in GPSA says I deal with it. I learned something from them. Every one of you added something to my life. So thank you so much, and that's enough because I will cry. Thank you.

- **Ajay Barman:** Thank you, Marwa. It's a bittersweet moment for me, and I want to thank both Marwa and Pal for your hard work for GPSA. I know GPSA, we, Marwa, always talk about GPSA as a family, and if I can vouch for her, like, she truly believes that she is passionate about GPSA, I started working with them as a colleague and ended up being a part of this beautiful family. The work she does for GPSA sometimes is as a senator, like as a member of the GPSA. Sometimes we, It's hard to see like how much work it needs at the background to keep this big organization going. And she worked a lot. And sometimes our oh, college representative gets an email from her, maybe in the middle of the night, because it is a hard job and keeping that job along with our PhD research. It's hard. And also I want to. I want to thank my past roommate, who joined GPSA because somehow, I encouraged him or influenced him and his work. Pal's work to GPSA, his advocacy to the university level, to the State level. He also went to Washington, DC. To advocate for us for a long time that GPSA never experienced that kind of dedication towards our organization, and it's a bittersweet moment for me because I was. I was walking in a park because they were working really hard for me, and there was hardly any hard work for me to do so. I was like hardly working so, as they both are leaving right now. I am looking forward to working with Ali as well as Desmond, and I hope they will keep the legacy going so it will be easier for me before finishing. I want to thank every one of you, you as a senator, even though they work hard. But the work will not go. The work will not go anywhere. If all of you do not work for the GPSA and the work assigned to you, they can assign work as much as work to you, but if you are not fulfilling them, then our GPSA will not be able to do so. Will not go anywhere. But I want to thank each one of you for doing your part within the GPSA. so I will end on the behalf of everyone. I want to thank Marwa and Pal for their hard work for the GPSA, and I wish both of them a great career in the future. Thank you, everyone.
- **Tathagata Pal:** Thank you, Ajay and anyone else who would like to add something. But yes, sure. Do you have something to share they need? They



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like to hear from you. Thank you, Marwa. Thank you everyone. So, as Marwa was saying, this is also my last GPSA meeting. So I have been working with GPSA for the last 3 years, and I have the. I had the good fortune to work with several very talented and great graduate and professional students. I know how hard it can get to manage your research and advertising for the students representing them. So thank you so much. Everyone for doing what we're doing right now, and I hope that GPSA will be really going strong even after we leave thank you so much for all of your cooperation. And yeah, that's all I have. Thank you for everything.

- **Marwa Aly:** Thank you, and one thing. I would like to share that if, for any reason, someone gets angry with me. Please, please. I would like to say I'm sorry it wasn't intended. Okay, I don't remember, but I don't like anyone to be angry for any reason, and as Pal mentioned, we would like to hear all of the GPSA become stronger and stronger, and that's all because of you because you are here. GPSA is here without you, there wouldn't be any GPSA. And with this, the meeting is adjourned today Happy fall, happy holiday, And thank you so much. Thank you.

- 07:30 | Adjournment