



## **President's Report to the Senate**

Senate Organizational Meeting, September 7, 2016

Rajesh Kumar, GSO President

I would like to welcome all of you to the first GSO Senate meeting of the new academic year. In case you missed the first Senate meeting for some reason, I'd like to encourage you to attend our upcoming meetings. I also would like to thank our former President, Can Aslan, for his contribution to the graduate student body. Having him on the Board as VP of Internal Affairs is extremely helpful to the current Executive Board. Together with the GSO Senators, Executive Board members, and Committees, I look forward to serving the graduate students of Syracuse University this year and improving upon what has been established and accomplished by our predecessors.

## **Officer Elections**

As per the GSO Constitution, we held elections in April 2016. The Senate elected four officers to the Executive Board, five University Senators, and three Senators-at-Large. In today's meeting, we will be electing officers for the two remaining positions on the Executive Board, the Recording Secretary and Financial Secretary, 5 more University Senators to represent us in the University Senate, and 4 more Senators-at-Large to represent graduate students in the GSO Senate. We will recruit members for the standing committees of the GSO. These committees vastly increase our capacity to work within several themes at once. Most positions do not require any prior experience. The agenda items that align with the current Executive Board's goals are provided in Appendix I. If any of the items on the agenda of the committees interest you, please contact Can Aslan ([gsointernalvp@syr.edu](mailto:gsointernalvp@syr.edu)) to join the respective committee(s).

Additionally, serving as an officer/senator is a great experience, in terms of professional development and self-improvement, and I would encourage you to join us to gain experience in student governance while serving the graduate student body at Syracuse University.

## **Syracuse Welcome Shuttle Service**

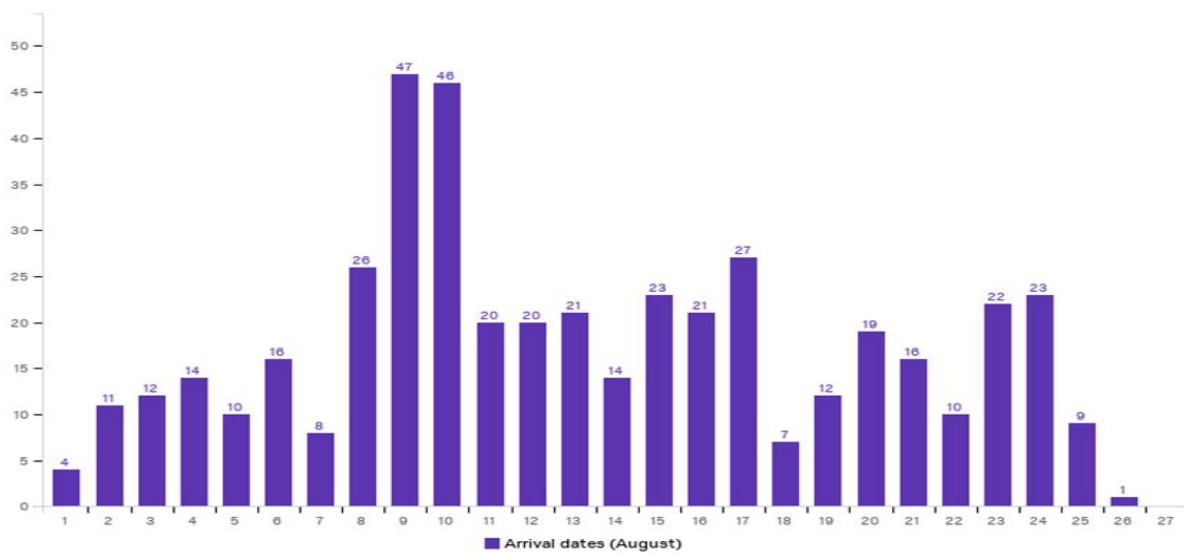
Building on the remarkable success of the last year's Syracuse Welcome Shuttle Program, once again, the GSO collaborated with three administrative offices, namely, Enrollment Management, the Graduate School, and the Office of First-Year and Transfer Programs, and provided a warm welcome to incoming students by transporting them from the airport and train/bus stations to their apartments/hotels. The shuttle service was available from 10am to 10pm from August 1st to 27th. Two emails were sent to the incoming graduate and undergraduate students with information about the transportation service and links to 'shuttle request forms' to collect arrival information. A total of ten graduate student drivers and two dispatchers were recruited and provided orientation and training.

Dispatchers directly communicated with the incoming students and drivers to update the schedule.

<b>Shuttle Service Expenses</b>		<b>Funding</b>	
<b>Items</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Vans	5862.79	GSO	4000
Drivers	4172.5	First year/transfer	1500
Dispatchers	3440	Enrollment Mgmt.	8563.87
Gas	532.35	<b>Grand total</b>	<b>14063.87</b>
Snacks	42.23	The planned budget was \$18,000.00 = GSO (\$4000) + First year/transfer (\$1500) + Enrollment Management (\$8563.87)	
Parking pass	14		
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>14063.87</b>		

The arrival traffic is presented in Figure 1. A total of 546 pick-up requests were received. Most of them were served. In addition, about 100 immediate requests (received through email, social media, or text) were also served. The service was available to both undergraduate and graduate students. However, the majority of students who used the shuttle service were international graduate students.

Fig1: Date-wise arrival of incoming students



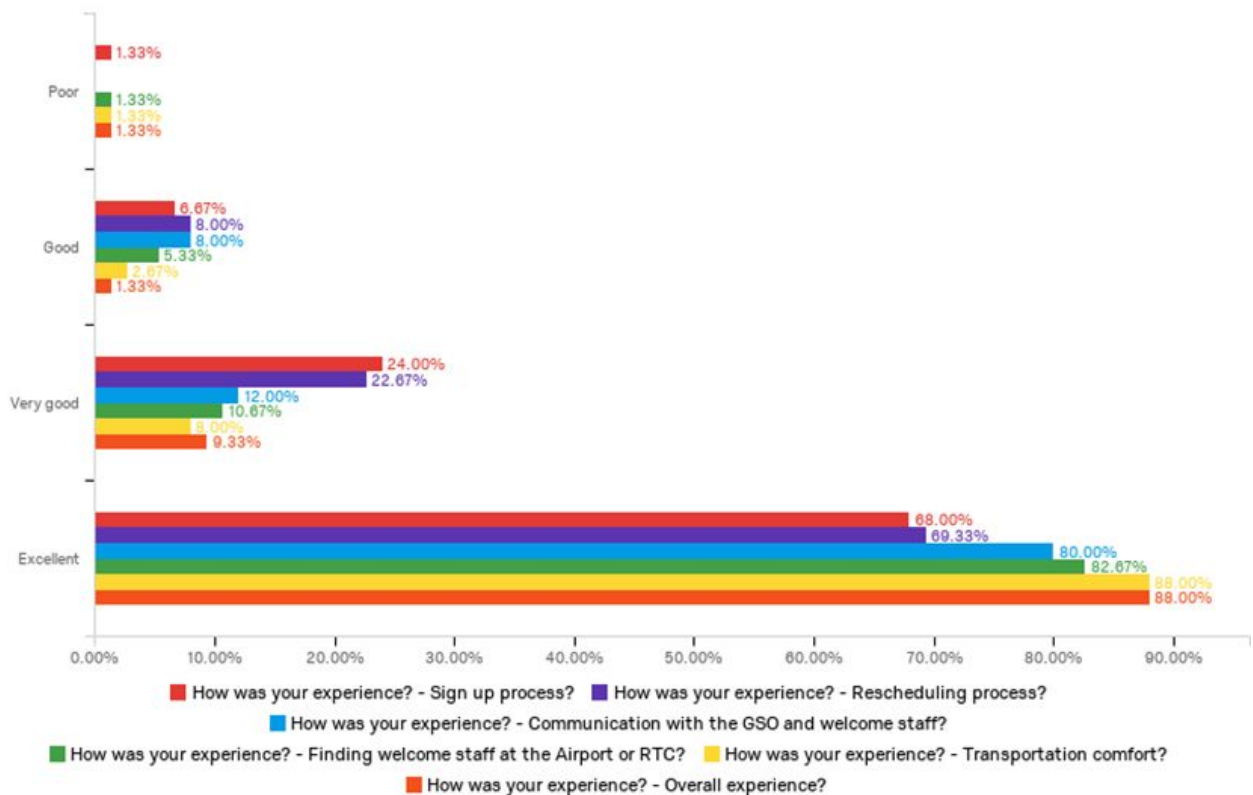
A comprehensive report on the welcome shuttle program is available on the GSO website. I would like to acknowledge and thank Nancy Cooper, Office Coordinator in Enrollment Management, and Gabby Chapman, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, for their tremendous help and support in setting up and running the whole program. I would also like to thank Can Aslan, former GSO President and current VP of Internal Affairs, who provided a complete insight of the program in the beginning and shared last year's

experience in detail, which helped me understand the requirements and run the whole program efficiently. Lastly, the program would not have been such a success without the complete dedication and commitment of the graduate student drivers (Sai Han Myo Tun, Kensuke Nakata, Francis, Jay Parikh (Volunteer), Michele Meyer, Mayara Ribeiro, Sara Sotoud), and dispatchers (Emma Bingay and Pulkit Jain). I would like to thank them, in particular.

Feedback from students who used the service is overwhelming, so far (see Fig 2). Most of them have praised our staff, mentioned the importance of this service, and recommended that the service should continue every year. Some selected comments from incoming students who used the service are given in Appendix II.

### Career Services for Graduate Students

Fig 2: Feedback from students



Centralized Career Services for graduate students is unable to provide adequate services to graduate students due to insufficient funding, staff, and proper organizational structure. It was one of the issues I brought up while serving on the University Senate Committee on Student Life last year. The committee agreed that it is one of the top concerns for graduate students on campus and worked on it. They worked with the Director of Career Services, Associate Director of Career Services, the GSO, and reported its findings to the University Senate. The highlights of the report are given below:

*Findings:*

- Inadequate staff and funding compared to the other Carnegie Institutions
- Office of Career Services organizes Career Fair and collects fees from the employers in attendance, which in turn decreases the number of employers that attend.
- Individual Schools and Colleges waive these fees and attract more employers than the centralized career services.
- Only about 20% of the employers at career fairs are actually interested in hiring international students. However, 58% of the students in attendance are indeed international students.

*Recommendations:*

- The University must determine its commitment to the students. Moreover, it must also determine what services it wants to provide students and then plan the budget and the allocation of funding accordingly.
- Central Career Services should have 60% of its operating budget funded by the University; a set budget that will not fluctuate between years.
- The addition of two staff members to the office, one that would be specialized in international students and job search, and one that would be specialized in employer interactions and connections.
- Career Services should focus more on career education instead of career services.
- Review of the mission and goals of the individual colleges' career services should be carried out.
- The individual colleges' career services should promote, collaborate and communicate more among themselves and the central career services.

During my one-on-one meeting with the Chancellor and Provost, I brought these issues up and demanded an explicit review and organizational restructuring of the graduate student career services. They acknowledged that this is an important issue and will take priority.

**Off-Campus Safety**

Off-campus safety has been a long-standing concern for Syracuse University students. This was the second issue I had brought while serving on the University Senate Committee on Student Life last year. The Committee met Elin Riggs, Director of the Office of Off-campus and Commuter Services (OOCCS); Tony Calisto, Senior Vice President and Chief Law Enforcement Officer of DPS; Bobby Maldonado, Chief of Public Safety of DPS; and Joseph Cecil, First Deputy Chief at the Syracuse Police Department (SPD). They identified several issues and reviewed the existing solutions (Neighborhood Watch, Locking the door, LiveSafe App, Blue Lights) that has significantly decreased the number of burglaries in places where it has been implemented, and recommended for safety sessions during new students orientations.

Alexander Maclin Lynch, a recent graduate from Syracuse University, also studied the issue as his senior capstone project. He made a recommendation to install CCTV cameras on streets with significantly large number of crimes. According to Alex, CCTV camera installation project is in the planning phase. Alex is appointed with Department of Public

Safety (DPS) as Community Safety and Security Analyst, and partnering with SU, SA, Landlords, State of NY, City Council, businesses, Westcott Community Center, Syracuse Police Department (SPD), and the GSO to assess the requirement and find the funding to complete the project.

Additionally, the issue was studied by two other groups, namely, Student Affairs Advisory Board (SAAB) and the ECS-GSO. SAAB invited Alex Lynch and discussed the issues and endorsed his idea of installing the cameras. ECS-GSO conducted a survey on off-campus safety. A total of 249 people responded, 70% of whom indicated they felt unsafe.

The actual reports of University Senate Committee on Student Life, Alex, and ECS-GSO on this matter are available and can be produced upon request.

The Chancellor agrees that this is a serious problem and is closely related to the graduate student housing issue. He assured that the administration will identify locations where graduate student live and crime statistics at those locations, and will take strong measures to resolve the safety issue.

## Appendix I

Suggested agenda items for GSO committees for the 2016-17 academic year:

- 1) Student Life Committee
  - a) Off-campus safety
  - b) Sexual Assault
  - c) Transportation
- 2) Grant Committee
  - a) Timely review of applications
- 3) Finance Committee
  - a) Timely review of applications
  - b) Creating the annual budget for the 2018 fiscal year
  - c) Curating the GSO Fiscal Policy
- 4) Graduate Employment Concern Committee
  - a) Review of working conditions of graduate employees
  - b) Employee Insurance
  - c) Family and Sick leaves
  - d) GAs/IAs/FAs (10+ hrs) as employees
  - e) Labour Issues: Unionization
- 5) Academic Resource and Affairs
  - a) Career services for graduate students
  - b) Library
  - c) Grad space
  - d) Free Speech
  - e) Advisor Relations
- 6) Outreach
  - a) Social media
  - b) Event management
  - c) Sponsorship/External Affairs
  - d) Promotions
- 7) Diversity
  - a) Social Justice
  - b) LGBTQ
  - c) Multiculturalism
  - d) Veteran's affairs
- 8) Childcare
  - a) Review of resources offered by SU
  - b) Statistics (What percentages, how many kids etc)
  - c) List of issues and possible solutions
- 9) NAGPS
  - a) Legislative watch
  - b) State and federal advocacy

- c) Elections watch
- d) NAGPS-related travel

## **Appendix II**

*“Very helpful, as the place was very new and I did not know anyone in the place.”*

*“I really enjoyed the service. The staff waited 1.5 hours for me when my train was delayed and gave me a warm welcome. It was quick and friendly. The only improvement I would recommend is notifying the students by email that their application was considered and they are going to be or not going to be met. Since I did not get any respond I was not sure until the last minute whether somebody would meet me or not. Anyway, I got a pleasant surprise.”*

*“Sara picked me up at the Greyhound Station. What a coincidence that she and I are in the same department. We talked a lot during the way to my apt. Finally, I gave them cookies I bought in Japan. The Welcome shuttle is so excellent that I would like to be a member next year.”*

*“Very helpful! I feel welcomed! Thank you!”*

*“Excellent! I got to Syracuse on 9th Aug, a boy comes from Burma came to pick up my family. He was really kind and helped us carry the luggage so. I really appreciate it and I want to make friends with him. He told me that he lives in Clarendon Heights, could you help me find him?”*

*“It was very convenient for new students. Thanks for such a comfortable experience.”*

*“Very helpful as we were late but still we were able to commute through shuttles”*

*“Impeccably flawless :)”*

*“They were very helpful and friendly. Made me forget the tiredness for a while, even helped me with the luggage. My flight got canceled so after the tiring day they had, they had the patience to wait at 1am to drop me home, it was really appreciable.”*

*“They were fantastic and full of energy even at late night. They helped every one of us reach our apartments safely and also ensure that our luggage is in place. Few of them helped us shift our luggage to our floors. Helped in collecting apartment keys on the route. A big thanks to all of them. They gave us good information on the ride. Thanks to Sai who picked me up and my friends. Thanks to Rajesh GSO president for arranging the pickup. Thanks all for making it a safe and warm welcome.”*

*“Excellent service, nice people. The weather was terrible but I felt so welcomed by the staff. I know that not a lot of schools have such service so I really appreciate. Thank you.”*

*“The service was a life saver. Towing a number of bags would have been awful without the GSO shuttle service. Maya, our representative was very helpful, kudos to her.”*