



Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

General Council Meeting Agenda

April 1, 5:30 PM on Zoom

Officers

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President

Peter Su

Executive Committee

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Vice-President

Alex Joerger

Nominations Board

gsc-vp@mit.edu

Secretary

Naveen Arunachalam

Publications & Publicity Board

gsc-secretary@mit.edu

Treasurer

William Lindemann

Funding Board

gsc-treasurer@mit.edu

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Academics, Research, & Careers (ARC)

Sylvia Dai

Meicen Sun

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Activities (AC)

Henry Tran

Ruoxuan Yang

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Assoc. of Student Activities (ASA)

Becca Black

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gsc-diversity@mit.edu

External Affairs (EAB)

Jack Reid

gsc-eab@mit.edu

Housing & Community Affairs (HCA)

Mohammad Islam

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Muddy Charles Pub

Richard Park

gsc-muddy@mit.edu

Orientation (OC)

Shashank Agarwal

Maytee

Chantharayukhonthom

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Administrative Staff

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- I. Introduction, New Faces (5:30 – 5:40 PM)
 - a. Quorum Check
 - i. Sent email via Qualtrics
 - b. Quick word from ASA
 - i. Becca
 - I. Quick plug: ASA is very heavily recruiting for next year; lots of people are graduating and next year is going to be crazy year for everyone. Please contact asa-exec@mit.edu if interested!
 - c. Quorum check closed: 52 recorded votes.
 - d. Approval of March GCM Minutes: email sent out
 - i. Waiting to collect responses; move on to officer elections.
 - ii. Approval of minutes poll closed at 5:55PM (during officer nominations)
 - iii. 50 approved, 2 abstain.
2. Officer & EAB Chair Elections (5:40 – 7:40 PM)
 - a. We are re-opening nominations today. Nominations need to be seconded.
 - b. Order: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer
 - c. Format: 5 minute speech; 1 minute/question with 2 minute response
 - d. Ranked choice vote: list all candidates in order of preference; you can't vote against a candidate. If you don't like the candidate that is nominated, you need someone to run against them.
 - e. Jerry and Madeleine accept their nominations for president; current officers second both.
 - f. President election
 - i. Madeleine speech
 - I. I've never done anything like this over Zoom before! I am Ashdown president, did bachelor's in Biochem @ Smith College, now doing physical chemistry. In past two years in Ashdown worked on Events committee, then ran for AHEC on a campaign of "I'll help solve the logistical problems in Ashdown" – we cleaned out the storage



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closets. I improved event publicity and redesigned Ashdown fun fund. Helping officers run virtual events. Working on common spaces and developing new website. I want to support diversity, equity, and inclusion. I want to make sure all student demographics are informed about resources available to them. Advocate for financial support, work to make sure all doctoral appointments are fully funded. Focus on housing affordability. Creative problem solving.

ii. Jerry Ng

- I. 3rd year graduate student working on PhD in mechanical engineering. Previously Edgerton House president, worked on HCA. At Edgerton, advocated for “pothole-filling”, i.e. fixing problems from previous leadership, e.g. inventories that were out of date etc. Mental health @ Edgerton. Involved in countering bias in MechE quals by collecting data. GSC has the ability to raise the overall standard of grad student living. Take a grad student census and streamline information towards people so they get information that they need. (E.g. to get a census on families, and help get aid to them). I care a lot about diversity, equity, and inclusion. Housing is also huge.

iii. Questions

I. Views on unionization?

- a. Jerry: though historically GSC has been neutral, personally, I think unionization would be beneficial. The hard part now is doing it with the political climate we have. The GSC did not officially address the unionization petition; personally I think some points were inaccurate but the point is clear, and I think the GSC should have advocated for it as an organization.
- b. Madeliene: A union will help us negotiate across the table from administration.

2. To Jerry – view on housing?

- a. A union would have solved problems we had with Site 4



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3. To Jerry – for grad student census, would it be feasible to collect data from departments with a small number of students? (e.g. cases where HASTS is relatively underrepresented)
 - a. Jerry: The anonymization process – I've worked with data anonymization before. We need cultural buy-in from the grad student population.
4. Question for both candidates: diversity and overarching culture issues. Specific areas ripe for improvement? Any initiatives?
 - a. Jerry: Get each department to have a DEI officer
 - b. Madeleine: We should become more family-friendly. 30% of MIT students have a spouse or partner, 5-10% (?) have children, they are underrepresented. Make sure their concerns are heard by administration.
5. Question: How to support people with heterogeneous needs?
 - a. Madeleine: level the data barrier evident in stipend working group recommendations.
 - b. Jerry: Similar answer
6. Question: You have limited time – how will you manage?
 - a. Jerry: Get more people involved
 - b. Madeliene: Act as a catalyst to help people work together and maintain continuity. Project nights: open to MIT, and we help connect them to resources to make that project a reality.
 - i. Jerry: That's a dope idea.
7. Question: What you say sounds great, but every year we try to recruit more people
 - a. Madeleine: Jerry and I have a good network. We will continue to support website redesign.
 - b. Jerry: Reach out to individual departments. Increasing amount of clarity and which committees exist. (I didn't realize sustainability was a thing or that sustainability fund was a thing – that's an easy



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fix in some sense – there can be an FAQ given out to student organizations)

8. Question: It seems that both of you have an approach of complaining without addressing constraints. Will you continue to point out issues and possibly annoying people, or think through solutions?
 - a. Jerry: I disagree that I was immediately complaining about situations upon hearing them; I'm one of the voices that immediately advocates for possible solutions. In general, I've had a solution-based approach, and I am not too into complaining.
 - b. Madeleine: There's a lot to that. In order to be able to propose solutions to problems, there has to be more transparency. It is important for grad students to stand up and point out when something is wrong and not going ok.
9. Question: What is your first action going to be?
 - a. Madeleine: I don't want to decide that before meeting with old officers.
 - b. Jerry: I was going to say the exact same thing – we don't know who is going to be in what positions, and we don't know what everyone else cares about.
10. Follow-up: What do you want from this meeting with old officers, besides knowing where everyone is?
 - a. Madeleine: first item – have outreach meetings to student gov's and house organizations to make sure everyone knows what resources are available to them.
 - b. Jerry: Was going to say the same thing – outreach would be the first thing.
11. Question: Aero Astro quals change was a shitshow because there was no plan – if you cry out for change, the change might not be good change. I personally don't think the quals are an improvement (I don't want to deny that especially women were at a disadvantage, but then again, there's ways to counter that). If you go into a



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meeting with admins, what do you want to achieve if you're talking with Cindy/Suzy/Reif

- a. Jerry: Since we have no power, our power lies in helping others see our perspective and work with us. Approach this from a perspective of respect and friendliness.
- b. Madeleine: It is important for concerned citizens to be able to raise issues. I want to approach things by heading off deadlocks in advance by meeting with administration early. When meeting with Cindy and HCA and Reif, I created a brief with numerical details. Prevent situations like with Site 4 recommendation team not knowing about prices but being asked to suggest features.

12. Question: How do you square your statements about respect, etc. with unionization?

- a. Madeleine: Unions can help to solve problems by holding information centrally and passing down information. It doesn't necessarily have to be bad for students to unionize.
- b. Jerry: GSC does a good job representing students as students, a union would represent students as workers. It's important to make sure the union is respectable. It's obvious that unionization is what administration is against, and it's important to advocate that it's not what they're against. The GSC has no opinion on union; we aren't sure how the general grad student population feels.

13. Question: How are you going to improve transparency of communication

- a. Jerry: It's annoying to have to relay information from HCA meetings – it would be nice if GSC recorded the positions of everyone and had public meeting minutes. I was surprised that GSC has so many regular meetings with administration and general student body doesn't know about it.



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- b. Madeleine: Games of telephone: an administrator says one thing, then others hear it other ways
14. Quick comment: how do you perceive your role as a representative of all grad students. How would you handle representing all views, e.g. students who are against unionization?
- a. Madeleine: At the root of it, it's about being democratic, the role of GSC is to represent the grad students in support of welfare. In terms of assessing unionization sentiment is the job of unionization working group to find out what percent of MIT grad students support unionization. If it's found that a majority support unionization, the GSC should as well
- b. Jerry: Along the same lines – my personal opinions are not what are necessary for me to act as president. My beliefs/opinions are not in any way more important than anyone else's opinions.
15. Question: From your point of view, what's the difference between role of president and VP?
- a. Jerry: From my understanding, the VP runs elections and nomination board (information Madeleine and I discussed about). Separately, I know the committees each sits on are different, but a lot of decision making are done as a group among ExComm; I am running for both President and VP because I am interested in both positions.
- b. Madeleine: It's a good question because I plan to do things collaboratively. My approach has always been consensus-building. Make sure duties are delegated between people. Nominations board is an important role for vice president to make sure committees are filled with passionate/informed people who have the support of the grad student body.
16. Question: Both of you are grad dorm presidents. How will this change things for you as GSC president?



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- a. Madeleine: The important point here is that my constituency will have changed quite a bit; now I need to represent all grad students, even those who don't live in residence. First thing I'll do is a lot of listening – giving all grad students an opportunity to voice their concerns to me. There will be issues where the grad student body is divided; when that happens, I don't want to have tyranny of the majority, and that minority dissent gets heard.
- b. Jerry: Madeleine said it very well; the scope of the problem increases and the constituents change; the number of opinions and beliefs changes. How accurate my understanding of others' opinions are is important; having difficult and long conversations is important. How to create addressable solutions: outreach to different constituencies and figure out opinions in those groups.

17. Question: what would you do if another grad student disagreed with you vs. a faculty or staff member?

- a. Jerry: At the meet the candidates meeting, I talked with someone who I had a significant misunderstanding with, and we talked for a while. That approach for another student is fairly similar. The big issue is when I need to make a decision and explain that to someone who disagrees with me. That would be me dealing with having to be yelled at; and I think that's kind of unavoidable sometimes.
- b. Madeleine: In the meet the candidates meeting I had to do some position clarifying; first approach always is to understand where the other person is coming from.

18. Question: One thing I found a challenge was the need to balance the needs of a strongly vocal minority with the needs of a quite majority – e.g. negotiation with grad dorms. How will you try to take into account those



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constituents who are less capable/organized for lobbying to you?

- a. Madeleine: What you just brought up with housing is important and changing; the over-influence of house governments is almost written in the constitution. It's very easy to put a grad dorm representative on a committee. How do you recruit off campus people? We need to engage departments to recruit. E.g. issues with families; a minority of students have families, and we need to be proactive to meet with house governments. A majority of MIT students are in engineering and a minority are in USP and SHASS, and I want to directly engage with those groups.
- b. Jerry: I'd go about it in a similar way to Madeliene; we should also pay attention to silent minorities. Do outreach to represent all opinions.

19. Having the GSC do information sharing about unionization: How would admin take that, and how would union take that?

- a. Jerry: Administration would probably want some ability to influence what we're saying; we would give completely numerical and objective results. If a majority of students want to learn about a union, GSC should provide that. Provide unbiased results of unionization movements is something we should do. A bunch of grad TAs went on strike and got fired. Unclear whether admins would disapprove. How would the union feel? By the time it got to that point, the union would probably have that planned.
- b. Madeleine: I hope the administration would see it as us doing our job. I hope everyone sees it as an opportunity to build trust. Everyone's taking a very research-heavy, data-based approach to make sure we don't run into pitfalls found at other universities. I wouldn't support unionization if I



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didn't see students going about it in an awkward way. Hopefully union would see GSC as a way to share information with grad students and address concerns.

20. No more questions

iv. President vote

1. Jerry and Madeleine moved to breakout room

2. Discussion not recorded in minutes.

v. President vote results

1. Madeleine wins

g. Vice President Election

i. Jerry accepts nomination.

ii. Anyone want to run or nominate?

iii. Jerry's speech

1. You've heard everything I have to say, that's all.

iv. Questions

1. None

v. Jerry removed from room; discussion

vi. Alex sent out email for voting

1. Jerry wins

h. Secretary election

i. Naveen gave speech

ii. Questions

1. No questions

2. How do you plan to recruit a historian? Also how will you serve as a mediator?

a. Historian role should be paid.

iii. Naveen elected as Secretary.

i. Treasurer

i. There was only one nomination (Steven) – accepted nomination and seconded by officers.

ii. Steven's speech

1. Was on funding board and ASA last year; worked with Robin on financial responsibilities

iii. Questions

1. What are you interested in doing as Treasurer?



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- a. A lot of what the Treasurer does is more about working with people, and less about RFP's etc.
- b. Start up a new project, would be a little bit better for me if I were in the slightly lower responsibility role of Treasurer. I think Treasurer will still let me be involved and be part of decisions in a way that would fit my personal responsibilities a bit better.

iv. Closed discussion

v. Collecting votes

I. Steven elected

j. EAB chair election

i. Jordan Harrod nominated; seconded by officers

ii. Jordan accepts nomination

iii. Speech

1. Worked in science education and science advocacy

2. Served as vice chair and at large voting member

3. Next year planning to maintain current initiatives and restart programming

iv. Questions

I. None

v. Closed discussion

vi. Collecting votes

vii. Jordan voted in as GSC chair.

3. Redirecting of unused GSC Funds (7:40 – 8:00 PM)

a. Presented by Robin

i. Basic idea: COVID-19 is unprecedented

1. One consequence is that we have a large budget surplus – we couldn't spend the last part of our funds.

2. About \$90k left in our annual budget; there's an extraordinary amount of need that justifies pulling funds out of our reserves to redirect \$190k to communities in need.

3. Allocation: \$40k to support unrecoverable losses by ASA groups; \$50k donate to people in need (i.e. office of graduate education emergency fund), \$50k to Cambridge COVID-19 fund.



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4. This is strategically in the interest of grad students – helps us have a good relationship with the city council, and there's an argument that we don't engage with the community and are kind of transitory. It's fundamentally important to us that our community remains functional.
5. We don't know if we're allowed to do this; if it doesn't work, the \$90k will be donated to OGE emergency fund.

ii. Discussion

1. If we give \$100k, how much is left in reserves?
 - a. We currently have \$400-500k in our reserves; we hesitate to add it to our proper budget because we had concerns about sustainability – we want to fund more of a one-time expenditure with it that would benefit graduate students
2. Some questions: there's been a lot of debate about OGE's means-tested financial aid process (concerns that it expects you to use assets like savings/retirement accounts) and that it's an unnecessary burden. How do you see the OGE financial aid process and do you think the distribution of \$ can come with conditions on how it's allocated (e.g. doing away with means-tested application or have lower barrier to applying?) The wording on the OGE page is kind of harsh.
 - a. Robin: The process I'm familiar with establishes need by 1-on-1 conversations with people in OGE. I will need to follow up on that. I know a couple of people who have gone through this process, and that wasn't the experience they transmitted to me. Those are good questions.
3. Motion to suspend the rules and seconded to approve being able to vote on the resolution. Majority approved.
4. Any amendments?
 - a. None
5. The motion passes: 33 yes, 2 no, 1 abstention. Quorum is 33.

4. Officer Updates (8:00 – 8:10 PM)

- a. Officers open to feedback: gsc-officers@mit.edu



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b. Question: any plans for \$ for online events?

i. Previous resolution does not preclude it

5. Committee Updates (8:10 – 8:25 PM)

a. ARC

i. Elections are open; meeting is on the 24th at 4pm, zoom link will be in Anno.

ii. Virtual fireside chat with Nelson Lin on Thursday 04/09, 6pm ET

b. AC

i. Battle of Bands postponed

1. Booked room for October 30th

ii. Paint night had 20-ish students

iii. Canceled events: grad art showcase

iv. Red sox game not cancelled, but MLB season postponed means everything messed up

v. Virtual Event resources: paint w/ Me Boston will have free online paint parties. You need to have the paint supplies yourself.

vi. IMLeagues Spring quarantine game tournament.

vii. Wellbeats fitness app provided for free until April 30

viii. MIT Virtual Education fitness classes

ix. AC Election Monday April 6 5pm (password-protected)

c. ASA

i. Recruiting; Prepare for next wave of emails on this

ii. Currently spending most time working on virtual CPW plans

iii. Want virtual club fair

iv. Finished group applications today thanks to Steven

d. DEI

i. Fellows training postponed (in-person training probably better)

ii. 21-day racial equity challenge, sponsored w/ Food Solutions New England; some of us signed on and are doing daily challenges

iii. Met with new ICEO John Dozier

iv. If you want to help make masks, you can help (see link on slides)

v. Next full committee meeting on April 9th at 4:30

e. EAB

i. Next meeting TBD

ii. Most events cancelled, including NAGPS NE Regional

iii. Still occurring: April 15 statehouse visit being reformulated



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- iv. Grad Caucus Launch postponed (but will happen)
- v. Email gsc-eab@mit.edu with questions
- vi. Accepting nominations for subcommittee positions
- f. HCA
 - i. Stipend recommendation wrapped up: 2.94% increase; additional targeted programming (emergency provisions for COVID-19, 12-month stipends for all doctoral students, continued assistance for families, internal dissertation completion funding).
 - ii. Transition meeting in April
- g. Muddy
 - i. Richard not here: come to next board meeting! Coming next Monday at 7pm.
- h. OC
 - i. Maytee and Shashank election last month.
 - ii. First OC meeting 4/3/2020 at 3pm; contact mchantha@mit.edu for details if you'd like to join Zoom meeting.
 - iii. We want to keep orientation generally similar to last year. Looking to expand number of fun/sociable events.
 - iv. Pre-orientation, make people aware of things happening at MIT
 - v. Webinar at end of this month. We want to answer COVID visa questions.
6. Open Floor (8:25 – 8:30 PM)
 - a. No items



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Upcoming GSC Meetings

****Note:** All meetings are now online until further notice. Please contact the relevant committee to get details of how to join a meeting.

Academics, Research, and Careers (ARC)	TBD
Visiting Students Association (VISTA)	Every Monday, 7:00 PM
Activities Committee (AC)	TBD
External Affairs Board (EAB)	TBD
Federal Affairs Subcommittee	TBD
State and Local Affairs Subcommittee	TBD
Public Outreach Subcommittee	TBD
Development Subcommittee	Every Friday, 5:00 PM
Housing and Community Affairs (HCA)	Wednesday, 4/8, 6:00 PM
Off-campus Subcommittee	TBD
Sustainability Subcommittee	TBD
Transportation Subcommittee	TBD
Wellness Subcommittee	TBD
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)	Thursday, 4/9, 4:30 PM
Muddy Charles Pub	Monday, 4/20, 7:00 PM
Orientation Committee (OC)	Friday, 4/3, 3:00 PM
Executive Committee (ExComm)	Wednesday, 4/29, 6:30 PM

*Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are in the GSC Office (50-220)

Upcoming General Council Meetings (GCMs)

****Note:** All meetings are now online until further notice. Please contact the your council rep to get details of how to join a GCM.

Note: Dinner starts at 5:00 PM and meetings start at 5:30 PM

May General Council Meeting	Wednesday, 5/6, on Zoom
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