



Proposal: Reallocation of GSG Funds in Response to COVID-19
GSG Senate Meeting, April 13, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent changes to University policies, GSG has made changes to our operations. GSG's FY 2019-2020 budget, approved by the GSG Senate, had originally allocated a significant amount of funding to support RSO events, our own programming events and advocacy initiatives, Travel Grants, and other internal operational costs. Since we can no longer use these allocated funds as intended, the GSG Executive Board has developed a budget reallocation plan to make efficient use of them.

The state of this pandemic and its effect on the graduate student population is changing on a daily basis. Therefore, this proposal is just the beginning of our reallocation plans. We intend to reassess student needs on a bi-weekly basis and funnel funds where they are most needed.

As an initial step in our reallocation plans, GSG proposes to:

- 1) Expand our Emergency Fund by \$70,000
- 2) Donate \$15,000 to USC Civic Engagement to support on-going volunteer efforts
- 3) Reserve the remaining funds to support future initiatives that may arise due to the fluid nature of the pandemic.

On the following pages, we have provided written justification and rationale for each of these proposed changes. We hope the Senate will find value in these proposed changes and vote in their support.

STATUS OF FY 2019-2020 BUDGET

As of April 8th, 2020, the current standing of GSG's budget for FY 19-20 per USC Provost Finance & Controllershship is as follows:

TOTAL REMAINING:			\$632,720.00
Line Item	Budgeted	Actual	Remaining
General Operations			
Total Budget	\$133,293.00	\$62,058.00	\$71,235.00
Administration			
Total Budget	\$39,119	\$17,474	\$21,645
Advocacy			
Total Budget	\$48,899.00	\$15,236.00	\$33,663.00
Programming			
Principle Budget	\$92,908.00	\$59,843.00	\$33,065.00
Revenue	\$0.00	\$11,782.00	\$11,782.00
TOTAL		\$71,625.00	\$44,847.00
Travel Grants			
FY 19-20	\$268,273.00	\$164,079	\$104,194.00
RSO Funding			
Umbrella*	\$391,190.00	\$241,524.00	\$149,666.00
Discretionary	\$273,833.00	\$163,167.00	\$110,666.00
Joint	\$58,678.00	\$39,906.00	\$18,772.00
Volunteer	\$73,348.00	\$13,157.00	\$60,191.00
Social Justice	\$39,119.00	\$24,969.00	\$14,150.00
TOTAL	\$836,168.00	\$482,723.00	\$353,445.00
Other			
Enrollment Overage**	\$0.00	\$3,691.00	\$3,691.00

*Does not include funds distributed to Umbrella Organizations that are enrolled in UFDP. Those funds are expected to be returned by late April.

***Annual budget calculated by expected enrollment, which is based on enrollment from previous FY. This overage corrects for higher enrollment numbers than anticipated.*

PROPOSED EXPANSION OF GSG EMERGENCY FUND

The Graduate Student Government Emergency Fund program is designed to help students with unforeseen expenses arising from a crisis. The fund offers support as a stop-gap measure in an emergency situation. The funds are provided to quickly address financial setbacks and to help students stay focused on their coursework while progressing toward graduation. The funding limit is \$700 per student per year.

For the 2019-2020 academic year, a total of \$14,000 was allocated to the Emergency Fund Program. Of this amount, \$6,000 remains for the duration of the academic year. Due to the pervasive nature of this pandemic, we propose to reallocate a total of \$70,000 to this fund to support the increased number of students facing unexpected expenses arising from this crisis. Examples of these expenses include, but are not limited to: loss of income or wages, increased caretaking responsibilities, relocation costs, essential living items, and citizenship renewal fees.

By reallocating a total of \$70,000 to this fund, GSG will have the capacity to provide financial relief to a minimum of 100 graduate students on campus.

GSG plans to re-assess every 2 weeks to determine if additional funding should be reallocated to the emergency fund.

Therefore, we propose to reallocate \$70,000 to our GSG Emergency Fund for immediate use.

PROPOSED FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO USC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMMUNITY EMERGENCY FUND

Nearly half of GSG's annual budget goes to RSO event funding. In support of volunteer efforts, RSOs can apply for funding through the GSG Volunteer Fund, which inspires, equips, and mobilizes USC graduate students to take action to serve their communities. Of the \$73,348 that was allocated to the Volunteer Fund for 2019-2020, \$60,191 remains. We propose to donate \$15,000 of this to the USC Office of Civic Engagement to support ongoing volunteer efforts.

The USC Office of Civic Engagement supports and promotes more than 400 community initiatives in our local neighborhoods and strives to assist families and small businesses in gaining access to resources that support their health and vitality. The Office seeks to protect, develop, and cherish our neighborhood communities, as they are integral to the identity of our university.

In recent years, GSG and USC Civic Engagement have worked closely on a number of issues relating directly to the well-being of graduate students on campus, as well as the well-being of members of the community; Civic Engagement proved to be an important advocate as students pushed for the founding of the Trojan Food Pantry. We have also collaborated with them on educational outreach programs to high school students in the UPC and HSC neighborhoods.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, USC Civic Engagement has spearheaded a Community Emergency Fund that will help serve the needs of the residents who live in the neighborhoods adjacent to our HSC and UPC campuses. Current efforts supported by the Community Emergency Fund include wellness calls to seniors who are some of our most vulnerable community members, and food distribution to seniors and local families. These efforts began at HSC in partnership with the Weingart YMCA, White Memorial Hospital and University Relations. Additionally, these efforts are expanding to the UPC neighborhood in partnership with Community Build and the Crenshaw YMCA. Further efforts may be expanded to include support to local small businesses and nonprofits who provide essential social services to youth and families to help them through this challenging time.

Committing financial support to our neighborhood communities is essential, now more than ever, with the unprecedented hardships brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. While a donation from GSG would not directly affect graduate students, it would support our local communities in which many graduate students live, which is a benefit to us all.

Therefore, we propose a \$15,000 contribution from the GSG Volunteer Fund to the USC Civic Engagement Community Emergency Fund.

PROPOSED RESERVATION OF FUNDS

GSG has been advised by University Leadership and Administration that they are developing an Emergency Fund specifically for graduate students who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. GSG supports this because the University will have a full time staff to support incoming applications and logistics, and a stronger capacity for handling the influx of students in need. However, the plans and timeline for this grant program have not been finalized and it is unclear when students will be able to access these funds.

To cover the gap between now and when this University grant program is finalized, GSG is proposing an initial reallocation of \$70,000 to expand our own Emergency Fund program in order to get money to students in need as soon as possible.

Once University Leadership establishes their Emergency Fund, GSG may consider funneling our funds into their program. This depends on many factors including: 1) how much money the University is able to provide without using student programming fees, 2) eligibility criteria, and 3) the nature of this grant program. Rationale for saving a portion of our funds is that other unpredictable student needs may arise due to the fluid nature of this pandemic that GSG is poised to help with, such as moving costs, healthcare expenses, or summer school-related travel.

Furthermore, it is possible that the USC Graduate School will have decreased enrollment for the next academic year. For GSG, decreased enrollment would mean a decreased budget. Therefore it may be wise to save a portion of this year's funds to maintain our programs for next year, including Travel Grants, Emergency Fund, and Childcare Subsidy.

Every effort will be made to efficiently use our funds, not duplicate efforts, and support our entire student population. Because these issues and conversations will continue over the summer months when the GSG Senate is not active, and require quick decision making, we also propose that the Senate grant power to the GSG Executive Board to make decisions regarding future reallocation of the 2019-2020 budget.

Therefore, we propose to reserve \$547,720 and grant the GSG Executive Board power to reallocate funds without Senate approval for May through August 2020.