

Dear Highlanders,

The holiday season is just around the corner, and I hope that all of you were able to end Fall Quarter strongly! Although I cannot emphasize enough the knowledge and sense of fulfillment that comes with being an active member of the student body, our *top priority* should always be our academic performance as that is the fundamental reason that we are all here at UCR.

I wish you all the best and a safe Christmas break with your families, friends, and loved ones. As I read about the horrific shootings that occurred earlier today at a Connecticut elementary school, my grief for the victims is a stark reminder to keep things in perspective and always cherish time spent with the individuals who care for you the most.

With that being said, for the Graduate Student Association this quarter has presented its fair share of challenges since for many of your Executive Officers (including myself), this year is our first time being involved in GSA. I feel that many of us took an enthusiastic leap of faith, but rather than caving in to the steep learning curve we have instead emerged as more competent student leaders –more knowledgeable, efficient, and prepared to tackle your most pressing concerns while passionately advocating on behalf of your interests to administration and government at all levels.

I thank you for all your contributions thus far in the year, and strongly encourage all of you to keep it up. Let there be no doubt that your voices are being heard and as student government, we are your humble representatives and it is our job to fight for your interests. But, we cannot do it alone. We need your help in being active participants in the process. There are no dumb questions and no concerns that are too small. Let me reiterate that it is our job to communicate your voice and your concerns so that actionable solutions may be implemented in a timely manner.

Based on your valuable input, our team has been able to identify a number of areas that need improvement. First, a significant portion of the revenue for our Conference Travel Grant (CTG) fund is not guaranteed year-over-year. Thankfully, due to the generous Chancellor Tim White, prudent financial management of past GSA administrations, and your hard-working CTG Coordinator, Katherine Dejernes, we have been able to operate with rolling temporary funding on an annual basis. This temporary funding process is not sustainable and will inevitably become more and more reliant on students to foot the bill in two ways: (1) Student Services Fee Advisory Committee (SSFAC) allocations, and (2) new fee-referenda. Both of which are

unacceptable. We have already been footing the bill with the rising tuition costs; yet have been receiving less value in return on our investment as resources continue to be cut. I will work closely and creatively with your newly elected Finance Officer, Steven Jew, to develop an agreement with UCR administration on how to secure future financing. With all the transition currently taking place at the highest levels coupled with it being a hugely important election year it has been rather difficult to move forward with large-scale structural initiatives, however looking back it played out in our favor now that we can turn our focus internally rather than have to be endlessly at the mercy of budget-cuts.

Second, our website is completely outdated. In Winter Quarter our team will begin discussions and taking input from all of you as to the best way to proceed in this site overhaul. If you have any suggestions please feel free to email them to gsaucr@ucr.edu It seems that a systemic and recurring issue is the difficulty of navigating in order to simply access the information that is readily available on our website. Also, thanks to your Public Relations Officer, Lauren Hale, we have re-established our social media presence on Facebook:

It is an open group within UCR and will be used to post details about events such as Grad Bash and our coffee socials. Please join at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/232946590168927/>

Lastly, partially contributing to some of the tension that had built up internally was the large amount of holes we need to plug up in our bylaws. At points they are vague and can be interpreted in various ways and at other points they simply leave out very important and detailed information. I'm confident that your Executive Vice President, Rachel Cassel, is fully equipped with the help she needs to plug up these holes. I'd also like to mention that she has contributed a wealth of knowledge and experience to newer Officers as Rachel served as immediate-past GSA President.

The topics covered above are what we feel to be GSA's main priorities going forward, but let's shift gears shortly to touch on some of the successes we had. First, without a doubt the passing of Proposition-30 is our biggest student victory thus far. Students turned out to vote in record numbers and saved the UC-system alone \$250M in trigger budget-cuts and the broader California public-education system was saved in excess of \$1B. Yes, we are off the cliff for now, but we must leverage this momentum and take the offensive to continue gathering up these little wins as they will add up for the all the future students who come after us. We must all work together to ensure that the same opportunity and access to public higher education is available to future generations. I cannot commend our external team of officers enough; your

Legislative Liaison, Liliana Klein, as well as your Campus Organizing Director, Naveen Cheerath, for their hard work and long hours in accordance with the leaders of University of California Student Association (UCSA), the voter registration team put together under the leadership of the undergraduate student government (ASUCR) and its President Liam Dow, Highlander Editor-in-Chief Christopher Locascio and his staff, and all the other student groups and individuals who helped make our jobs as student leaders easier. If it weren't for their hard work every single student would be paying at least \$2,600 more than they're paying now.

Second, our team under Lauren's leadership and initiative were able to generate a record turnout for our Fall Grad Bash. We will continue working hard to provide you all with fun social activities to bring us closer together as one UCR family. And lastly, I feel that we have done an excellent job opening up lines of contact to administration, staff, and faculty in a way that will allow GSA's future leaders to not miss a beat as they transition in and implement new and creative ideas that will improve and evolve your student government for the better!

In closing, my team here at GSA has worked day and night to represent your interests to the best of our abilities. There have been some missteps along the way, but that is exactly why we need all of your help to continue being closely involved with the process and other student affairs, so that we can deliver the results that will materially improve your experience as a student here at UCR! We look forward to returning from break energized and with renewed vigor to tackle all your concerns!

Respectfully yours,

Henry Huang