



September 23, 2026, | 6:00 pm

Online (Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER 06:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES 06:27 p.m.

Members and attendance

President Swarnima Kain	Present
Executive Vice President Christina Fragel	Present
Vice President of Student Affairs Prahbhashis Bose	Absent
Vice President of Representation Timothy Alo	Present
Vice President of Finance Promise Emmanuel	Absent
Communications Chair Ken Bigba	Present
Academic Affairs Chair Hasnat Aslam	Present
Quality of Life Chair Colten Skinner	Absent
Grants Committee Co-chair Meryl Oherika Sahouet	Present
Grants Committee Co-chair Adeyemi Oyelami	Present

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

Meeting Minutes:

Meeting began at 6:05pm

President Swarnima Kain –

Good evening, everyone, and thank you for being here. The meeting is starting now, we have three items to cover: (1) The grant – we will finalize the remaining details of the Chancellor's grant so we can open the applications next week. (2) a proposal for electing a chief of staff – I want to talk through a proposal for a new Chief of Staff position on our exec team. And (3) we will leave time at the end for other GSA businesses, updates, or anything you want to raise. The most time-sensitive item is the grant.

Let's start!

- (1) For the grant, there's a change to the application platform. We have moved the Chancellor's grant application off NuRamp and onto a Microsoft form. The reason is pretty practical: this format makes it much easier for us to organize, review and evaluate applications in one place. We're doing this to make the process smoother for us and for the reviewers as well. So that is the first change.

Secondly, the reimbursement process has changed completely. Now, travel will be arranged and purchased through your sponsoring department, and should you be awarded a travel grant, the department will receive a transfer of the funds awarded. This is a completely new change to the grant, so read it carefully and if you have any questions, let me know.

There's also a third change: now only graduate students will be grading the applications. There will be no faculty or staff involved. We want a more proactive process; we need the applications to be graded sooner. Our goal is to grade all of them within two weeks of the deadline. Once we open the application cycle, applicants have two to three weeks to apply, and then the graduate students have two weeks to grade them. We will be pretty strict about the deadlines.

These are the major changes to the Chancellor's grant. I know it took a lot of time, because there was a lot of discussion on how to make it smoother. The main reason we are here is hear your thoughts and suggestions about these major changes. If anyone has any questions, drop them in the chat box, speak up, or raise your hand.

Executive Vice President Christina Fragel –

I will speak quickly as we addressed it during the summer with the grad studies office, and we thought we might need to change deadlines for people applying. Right now, students have been applying for funding for conferences they've already attended, but they really should be applying for future conferences they have not yet attended then, only getting reimbursed after attending. So, we should fix that as well.

President Swarnima Kain –

Definitely! We want students to apply at least one semester before they go for their travel or conferences. But at times, students just apply in that same semester, and that becomes difficult for us to reimburse on time. That is something we will be taking care of and putting that, not as a requirement but as information, on our grant website. So, students know they can apply at least one semester before, if they want to.

Executive Vice President Christina Fragel said it made sense as that's how it's been run in the past and it was only requested as a change this year. President Swarnima asked if anyone had anything else to add.

Communications Chair Ken Bigba –

Is it really okay to grade the competition without involving any faculty?

President Swarnima answered yes, as she and the Grant Committee Co-Chair Meryl Sahouet exchanged with the Chancellor Office.

President Swarnima Kain –

Meryl and I had a really good conversation with Ryan from the Student Life, and he's totally fine with faculty and staff members not being involved in our grant process. So, yes! Any other questions? This is the last call prior to finalizing the website.

Xinpeng Zhang, a student, asked if reimbursements from last cycle will be proceeded before or after the change of rules.

Grant Committee Co-Chair Meryl Sahouet –

Thank you, Xinpeng, for your question. I would like to bring some more clarity. When we're handling the grants, once it goes to the reimbursement stage, we do not have total authority on that; that section is now up to the administration. From what I know, the current reimbursements are being taken care of, so you should have an answer in the next two weeks at least. But, for this new cycle, it is going to be different.

After closing the Grant item, the proposal for a Chief of Staff position was introduced.

President Swarnima Kain –

Let's move to the second point on our agenda. I would like to bring a proposal to the group. I would like us to consider adding a Chief of Staff to the GSA team.

- (2) The purpose is twofold. Coordination currently falls on too few people, and this role would provide support and continuity. The chief of Staff would work closely with the President on operations and priorities, as advisor and assistant. They will represent the president at committees, meetings and events when asked. They will handle communication and coordination across the exec team, committees and members, and follow up on deadlines. Finally, they'll serve on the ASUN team if needed and liaise with university leadership and campus organizations.

Are members in favor? Please show a thumbs up.

Executive Vice President Christina Fragel –

We may need to move to the other meeting to have a better visibility of what we vote for. I support it, but adding a position requires amending the constitutional document, so a bill must be introduced and passed. I also did not receive the document and cannot see the screen well.

President Swarnima emphasized that it was only a proposal and not a bill yet. But a bill will be introduced next meeting to officialize it.

Grant Committee Co-Chair Meryl Sahouet –

I support proposing the bill next meeting. It would take load off the current team.

President Swarnima explained that she was currently managing events and finances largely alone, with Meryl helping on the grant, so she needs the extra hand. Anyone interested should email her with the hours they can commit. ASUN already has this position, and she will bring similar benefits to GSA, with details in the October bill.

Sara-Brock-Contreras, a student new to the GSA, asked how the position was appointed/elected and if it was open to any graduate student.

President Swarnima answered yes. It was open to all graduate students. But they would have to prove that they have been participating to previous GSA meetings in the past two semesters. Student would be generally appointed by the President. Finally, members could recommend people who would be a good fit per email. The follow-up would be at the October meeting.

Lastly, the third item of the meeting, other GSA businesses, was tackled.

- (3) President Swarnima let members know that they may share events and announcements and send flyers to Ken for GSA's Instagram posts and stories.
 - Thais Jardim shared that the Biological Engineering GSA was hosting a Fall Welcome BBQ on Friday at 5 p.m. at Chase Hall and all students were welcome.
 - Adeyemi, the Grant Committee Co-Chair also shared that the American Society for Engineering Education RSO was holding a welcome event next Wednesday September 30, from 5-6pm in Kiewit Hall. Graduate students and friends were welcome.
 - Another student shared that the Anthropology's new representatives were not receiving GSA emails as the list still had the old ones as asked if it could be addressed. President Swarnima asked them to email the old and new representatives' names to GSA (gsa@unl.edu). Colton (Quality of Life committee) and Tim ran into technical issues updating the list and are working with IT. It will be fixed before the October meeting.
 - Ken posted both addresses in the chat: the communications email for events, clubs and RSOs, and the official GSA email for assembly and membership matters.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:27pm