

GSS GENERAL MEETING
Minutes for 4-10-17
By GSS Secretary, Erin Rowland

Equity and Diversity Committee

- Bill proposed on securing guarantees for TA's/RA's/GAS taking Leave of Absence (LOA).
 - Students should be allowed to take a leave of absence up to two (2) years for medical reasons and other emergencies. This would allow students to postpone their studies for a definite period of time, normally not to exceed these two years in the event of unavoidable circumstances (e.g., documented medical reasons, active military duty, etc.). Supporting documentation must be submitted with the LOA form.
 - The bill is working toward a sick bank.
 - The policy secures a guarantee of re-enrollment in studies upon returning from a Leave of Absence.
 - Motion made for a vote and seconded.
 - The bill passed with 27 yays, 1 nay, and 0 abstentions.
- Resolution in opposition to legislation allowing guns on campus.
 - The bill offers that the GSS stands in opposition to any legislation that would allow firearms on campus, concealed or not, agreeing with the previous Faculty Senate resolution titled *Resolution Supporting the Current Policy Prohibiting Guns on Campus and In Opposition to Legislation that Would Alter Current Policy* that urges the Tennessee General Assembly to repeal the 109th General Assembly SB 2376-HB1736 amending Tennessee Annotated Code 39-17-1309 which allows full time University employees with handgun permits to carry concealed weapons on campus.
 - 27 yays, 0 nays, 1 abstention.
- Mental Health Bill 2
 - Due to recent increases in the number of cases related to the mental health and well-being of graduate students which can be contributed to improper advisor leadership or mentoring in addition to lack of access to campus resources, an imbalanced demanding research-work load, etc., the GSS suggests actions be taken to:
 - Improve campus-wide availability and outreach of resources for graduate students related to mental health and well-being
 - Improve the efficiency of communication and information channels to have a greater impact on providing students with meaningful access to mental health resources.
 - Create a task force to evaluate graduate student mental health needs and work place culture and a separate counselling center for graduate students to provide greater privacy.
 - Notes:
 - The creation of a second counselling center and SAIS evaluation by graduate school or university as some programs have very few graduate

students, and it would be easy to recognize which students had visited the center.

- Investigation of research-work-course load should also include an investigation of “banked hours” on campus as some students are subject to having to do these despite conflicts with TN laws. Such practices could subject the university to labor lawsuits.
 - Concern about Life Science GREs – whether or not they have the ability to complain anonymously about their situations. One of the senators asked whether or not students are using their ombudsmans.
 - Motions were made to end the discussion and revise the bill before another vote.
- Mental Health Bill 1
 - Bill supports the appointment of a separate ombudsperson for graduate and professional students and official website for the ombuds program.
 - TK suggested that because of the decision on the last bill, this bill should also be tabled for now. However, more information should be placed on the website. The bill was tabled by the senate, and a task force will be created.
 - Student Fees Bill
 - Bill would allow students at the Bresden Center to opt-in to fees from the following list if they are no longer taking classes / working on campus:
 - Facilities fee
 - Student Programs and Services fee
 - Primary
 - Health
 - Transportation fee
 - It was suggested that the language be opened up to not just include Bresden Center students.
 - It was also suggested that support of this bill could create a ripple effect with other students.
 - A motion was made and seconded that the bill be tabled until the language in the bill could be corrected to say that graduate representatives would just like to open an option with administration about this subject. Also, the language needs to be changed to be more inclusive of other departments.
 - Senator Selection Bill
 - The bill encourages that senators should be selected in the spring and that these senators should be appointed by their department to the GSS without an internal vote ONLY as a last resort. GSS also commits to doing orientation for new senators in the spring preceding a given academic year.
 - The senate suggested that a proxy also be selected at the same time.
 - A motion was made to pass the bill and was seconded.
 - The bill passed with 25 yays, 0 nays, and 2 abstentions.
 - President’s Report

- GPSAW was a great success. However, we need more help and attendance from graduate students going forward.
- GSS was selected to be part of ____, and received many accolades for the work they have conducted.
- The budget proposed by administration is supposed to reflect the student population. However, the budget currently is not reflecting the size of the graduate population. Going forward, senators should consider pushing the administration.
- Graduate Travel Awards Committee
 - Time to apply for summer travel has expired.
 - Deadline for turning in travel receipts is sometime in May. Extensions are allowed for this.
- SGA Structure
 - Senate Chair and Parliamentarian were added.
 - Next year, be sure to select a proper person for each executable position for:
 - Equity and Diversity
 - Communication and Outreach
 - Fun Run
 - Strategic Planning
 - Diversity Group
 - Election Commission
 - Travel Awards
 - Technology Officer
 - Treasurer
 - Public Relations Officer
 - Graduate Orientation
 - At Large / Non Senator
 - Chancellor Liaise
 - Legislative
 - As well as the Graduate Executive Cabinet
 - With time, it is also recommended to form a committee to focus on international students and possibly LGBT students to help with diversity and specific campus issues for those students.
- Be sure to nominate graduate students, faculty and staff for the GSS Awards.