

**STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2015 MEETING MINUTES**

❖ CALL TO ORDER

- GSS President John Keny called meeting to order at 5:30PM.

❖ ROLL

- Senators Present:

Amanda Clune	Katie Singer
Andrea Preales	Katie Williams
Angela Chuang	Kelly Rooker
Anne Turner	Kelsey Stephenson
Amy Hegar – for Kerry Cannity	Lydia Walker
Brittany Poe	Miles Henderson
Chris Acuff	Naomi Rinehold
Dave Desimone	Pragya Poudel – for Jamie Glover
David Mendez	Ran Huang
Erika Panek	Robert Partee – for Taylor Hixson
Herb Piercy- for Renee Mikorski	Ronique Beckfold
Jackson Martin	Savannah Hawkins
Jenny Onley	Sunny Kim
Justin	Torrey Fieldman
Waterfield	

Those responded saying they cannot make it and do not have a proxy:

Michael Douty, Melissa Martin, Kyle Brazil

❖ UPDATES FROM GUESTS

- ***Dean Hodges***

- Enrollment for graduate students is holding steady. The chancellor is continuing to support graduate students with funding and is looking into getting additional funding to help support students through National Science Foundation (NSF) grants.
- There will be collaboration with English as a Second Language (ESL), the English department, and the Writing Center to provide extra writing support for international students.
- The graduate school is currently preparing for the fall semester hooding ceremony. Please sign up as soon as possible if you plan to graduate in December.
- The number of doctoral degrees conferred at UT have increased. The graduate school is bringing more students with strong backgrounds directly into doctoral programs.

- The graduate school also provides a “Best Practices in Teaching” class to ensure that graduate teaching assistants are well-prepared to lead courses.
- *Key update: leave of absence and continuous registration*
 - Continuous registration has been in place for many years, and the leave of absence policy was added for extenuating circumstances and other emergencies that would necessitate an extended student absence. If a leave of absence is approved, it does not count against the total time for completing the degree.
 - Masters students do not have to be registered during summer months (not required to be continuously registered).
 - Doctoral students are required to be continuously registered (registered for coursework during all semesters, including summer) when they begin the dissertation process (600 level courses)
 - It is recommended that internships be completed either before enrolling in dissertation level courses or after the dissertation is complete.
 - Summer internships tend to be voluntary and usually do not qualify for leave of absence. In the name of fairness and consistency, a leave of absence is reserved for emergency situations. Continuous enrollment is in place because it encourages students to finish in a timely manner.
 - Students who leave their academic programs can come back and reapply, but readmission will be at the discretion of each individual department.
- **Dr. Morrow**
 - Faculty member of evaluation, stats, and measurement discussed upcoming changes for the SAIS evaluations.
 - 2014-2015 SAIS Task Force was convened to create a new set of items for the end-of-course (EOC) evaluation process. The task force looked at evaluation systems from other universities and also worked to incorporate feedback from students and faculty.
 - The move from paper evaluations to online evaluations caused a drop in overall participation. Currently, with the online system, around 46% of UT students complete the EOC evaluations.
 - The SAIS Task Force has created 11 new items for the evaluation process and is seeking feedback from students. There will be a small pilot study this fall, and a larger pilot study in the spring to gain insight into student and faculty opinions on the process.
 - Because the previous evaluations did not inquire about the unique aspects of some courses, along with the 11 new items, faculty will also have the flexibility to include supplemental items that are course-specific.

- Inquiry about questions that are specific to graduate teaching assistants: Dr. Morrow said that there will be an option to include evaluation questions that are specific to teaching assistants (or peer mentors).
 - Along with implementing the new evaluation system, professors will not be able to opt out of EOC evaluations. Additionally, professors cannot opt out of including qualitative, open-ended questions.
 - Inquiry: Will there be a marker for disability services? Dr. Morrow said she will look into how disability services handles the evaluation process.
 - It was suggested that faculty advisors for student group have some sort of evaluation to assess their mentoring abilities.
 - *Dean Hodges* discussed looking into a way to evaluate faculty advisors and graduate students on their mentoring abilities. The graduate school has been offering mentoring workshops. Dean Hodges encouraged students to you can bring up advisor evaluations with faculty members if you are invited to any departmental meetings.
 - Inquiry: Will the new evaluations have more transparency in data? More specific data for comparison?
 - Dr. Morrow said that mean scores for colleges and specific departments will be available.
 - Inquiry: Can the evaluations be required?
 - The Provost and other administrators feel that we will not get accurate data if we require students to fill out course evaluations, so they will continue to be optional.
 - Suggestion: Can we also have evaluations mid-way through the semester?
 - Because evaluations occur at the end of the course, students sometimes do not feel that the evaluations are applicable to them or useful for making changes for their course experience.
 - Dr. Morrow said that the new evaluation system will provide instructors with the flexibility to conduct more formative evaluation (during the semester) in order to make changes before the class is over.
 - This type of formative assessment would also allow for assessment of improvement within a semester time period.
 - Contact jamorrow@utk.edu for additional questions, comments, or suggestions.
-
- ***Serena Matsunaga***
 - Discussion of VolVision: Goal of becoming a top 25 university
 - 5 priorities
 - Undergraduate, graduate, research, faculty/staff, and infrastructure/resources
 - VolVision 2020:
 - Assessment of the past 5 years using online questionnaires and engaging with students, faculty, and staff (will last until December)

- This feedback will help to shape the goals for VolVision 2020.
- US News rankings do not incorporate graduate/research statistics
- Currently looking at metrics available (# of graduate degrees conferred) and exploring Association of American Universities (AAU) membership
- As UT has begun to review progress, they have realized that our academic programs emphasize more than volume (number of students who graduate). We are also working toward quality, commitment, and success.
- *Key Questions*
 - Why did you select UT as your graduate program?
 - Followed a professor from undergraduate work
 - Quality research happening in the department
 - Quality faculty members
 - Extracurricular activities
 - Noticed that the ranking of the department was improving
 - Saw that a department was hiring new, younger faculty with strong research backgrounds
 - Good relationship with advisor
 - Location was good (close to ORNL)
 - Stipend/cost of living (assistantships)
 - Specific strengths of a department
 - Ability to enter into a master's program that was funded and that did not require you to continue on to another terminal degree
 - Having the chance to work across different disciplines (MARCO and NimBios)
 - In what ways is UT doing well?
 - Having tangible improvements from year to year, lets students know that they are involved in making UT a better institution
 - Ability to transition quickly into getting hands on experience in graduate programs
 - Being able to use advanced status: UT accepts coursework from previous degrees which allows people to finish quicker
 - Research at ORNL (connections and collaborations)
 - New, more advanced facilities
 - Bringing in speakers who are top in the field, help make connections with top researchers and scholars in the field
 - Leadership training and opportunities (teaching and service)
 - Conferences that bring in top researchers in the field (networking and research purposes)
 - Allowing for teaching experience: UT allows for full control over the classroom (real, hands-on experience)
 - Hiring of new faculty

- Providing courses on “how to be a faculty member”
- What are some improvements that can be made? How can UT attract new students?
 - UT did not have information about where graduate has gotten jobs when they left the university (Information on where the opportunities are for people who are going into the job market)
 - More resources for graduate student success (more career support)
 - The Teaching and Learning Center offers a graduate teaching certificate and also offers single workshops on teaching practices.
 - STEM career fair: Mostly targeted toward undergraduate students
 - Funding: The website was not regularly updated. It is hard to find extra departmental funding. Positions become available but are not posted on the website.
 - Stipends: Large gap in competitive stipends in some programs. Many students receive lower amounts of funding. All funding opportunities and financial aid should be in one central location.
 - Need for funding opportunities for postdoctoral work as well as more support for locating postdoctoral opportunities.
 - Humanities center has information for students, including information on research fellowships and dissertation information
 - Office of Research offers a workshop on fellowships
 - More diversity in faculty
 - Need a place for graduate students to go with questions and concerns Now, typically go to the Office of Student Life
 - Proposing an ombudsman for graduate students
 - Top 25 universities have ombudsmen for students
 - Another concern is that Tennessee does not allow for change in residency (cannot qualify for in-state tuition), which may be a deterrent for some graduate students (i.e. spouses will never qualify, etc.)
- Contact Serena (smatsun1@utk.edu) with additional feedback.

❖ PRESIDENT’S REPORT

- Grading Scale Change
 - The grading scale for Graduate students will change to include the ‘minus’ grading scale. This will more closely mimic the undergraduate grading scale. The overall consensus from the Senate was negative with comments questioning why this was necessary. Most top 25 universities do not have

a A, B, C grading scale. Comments or concerns on this contact:

gss@utk.edu or gss2@utk.edu

- Chancellor's Luncheon
 - Game parking will generally remain limited for the time being. This year is particularly tough as several areas are under construction and parking garages are few in number. Next year will see the opening of new parking garages. If game day parking is required, graduate students are directed to their department for a special application. Any issues or questions regarding this should be sent to Jeff Maples, maples@utk.edu. The GSS Pres or VP can help with these issues as well.
 - The Code of Conduct is undergoing several changes including how the university handles misconduct. The judicial boards for disciplinary actions will now be consolidated into one board. The administration has reassured the Senate that any boards governing over graduate students will have at least 50% graduate student members.
 - Hog-Roast Social: For the Arkansas game, the GSS had a small social at Dunford Hall. John Keny smoked pork and chicken for the social (delicious!) Plans to have more socials are incoming.

❖ VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- UTK Food Pantry
 - Nathan Meek, GSS VP, Erica Davis, Director, Environment & Sustainability Committee, and others are starting a UTK Food Pantry. The UTK Food pantry will serve the UTK community for those in need of food.
 - Current issues with start-up are:
 - Space for pantry
 - Stocking the pantry
 - For those who would like more information or are willing to help out, please contact gss2@utk.edu

❖ COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Equity and diversity (Chair - Jenny Onley)
 - Ombudsman Bill: there are some concerns that by having Administration act as ombudsman will defeat the purpose of having an ombudsman as typically an ombudsman is a third party entity.
 - Jenny Onley and Katie Singer are working with the Dean of Students, Melissa Shivers, about these concerns
 - The Dean of Students is undergoing ombudsman training to become officially certified.
- Communication and Outreach (Chair – Savannah Hawkins)
 - Hog Roast took place before the Arkansas game
 - Several Graduate and many Undergraduate students participated

- More Socials coming up
- Travel Awards (Chair – Kelly Rooker)
 - Meeting upcoming (Oct. 20th) to discuss improvements to the application
- Fun Run – Big Orange Adventure
 - No update currently. Meeting will occur soon to kick-off planning.
- External Committee Reports
 - Student Health Advisory Committee: the committee is looking for feedback particularly from international students for ease of access, insurance, etc. Contact GSS or representative for this committee (ctandy@vols.utk.edu) for more information.
 - Technology Advisory Board: There are several updates from the TAB. First, the TAB saw an increase in the budget which will be supported by the increase in the technology fee. Second, since the start of Lynda.com integration with the university, users have been increasing every month. Third, the university will save money by moving away from blackboard and going to another similar student interface program. Finally, the committee is always looking for feedback on technology affairs around campus. Contact GSS or representative for this committee (ksinger2@vols.utk.edu) for more information.

❖ NEW BUSINESS

- GSS President John Keny motioned to nominate Elizabeth Conner for the position of secretary.
 - Elizabeth Conner was successfully appointed by the Senate
- Committee for Women in STEM
 - Derek Mull, Co-Chair for the committee, reached out to the Senate to inquire about (1) members that would like to sit on the Commission for Women in STEM and (2) members who would like to participate in the mentoring program. Several Senate members have already joined or signed up with the Commission for Women in STEM. Contact Derek Mull, dmull@vols.utk.edu, for more information.

❖ UPCOMING EVENTS

<p style="text-align: center;">Upcoming Graduate Student Senate Meetings</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thursday, November 5, 2015 at 5:30pm (Claxton 206) Tuesday, December 1, 2015 at 5:30pm (location TBD) (Tentative)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Other Events</p> <p>John Rader: From Law Student to Law Maker, Friday, October 9, 12:00 – 1:30: email GSS Pres if interested</p>

❖ ADJOURN

For questions please contact gss@utk.edu or gss2@utk.edu

- GSS President John Keny adjourned the meeting at 7:30PM