

GSS GENERAL MEETING
Minutes for 2-8-17
By GSS Secretary, Erin Rowland

1. OPENING REMARKS:

- Vote on ByLaws
 - Unanimous approval.

2. GUEST SPEAKERS:

- Dr. Bonnie Ownley – Faculty Senate President, Election
 - Campus Carry:
 - Proposed TN House Bill 170 – Veterans can carry
 - Proposed TN Senate Bill 131 – Anyone who has a permit to carry a firearm could carry one on campus.
 - If you support these, please contact your area representatives.
 - Leave of Absence:
 - Faculty with 9 month appointments do not accrue sick leave, unlike at all other public universities in state. The university is working on this.
 - Currently, if students have to take a leave of absence, they lose pay and health insurance.
 - Dr. Ownley recommends talking to one’s department head and advisor and getting something in writing about how to tackle this situation if a student faces it.
 - Childcare:
 - This is an important issue that UT will be looking at. They will be looking at other institutions and how they handle these things.
 - Dr. Davenport will be investigating this issue. When she arrives, express your opinions.
 - Housing can make short term arrangements for visiting faculty.
 - Diversity:
 - Working group has put together a proposal for a Top 25 Pride Center and that information will be conveyed to Dr. Davenport when she arrives.
 - The provost has expressed interested in also having a town hall with faculty concerning immigration and students.
 - Career Discussion Panels:
 - Go to the Provost with this topic and ask for a town hall.
 - Other Issues
 - The university is facing a 22% cut in research funding. This information has come from our federal liaison with lawmakers in Washington, D.C.
 - The future of the national labs is at stake (like ORNL), as are brain research, supercomputing, manufacturing research, and the national endowment for the Arts and Humanities.
 - Dr. Ownley encourages everyone to contact their representatives to discuss how this would affect them.

- Academic Honesty – There is a suggestion that all theses and dissertations be run through IAAuthenticate.
 - There are questions as to what we are doing to replace Safe Assign. Another senator mentioned that there is a way to check assignments in Canvas.
 - Contact Dr. Ownley with specific concerns, questions, or stories of how university policies have impacted you at: ownley@utk.edu.
- President of SGA Election Commission
 - April 10th – 14th is Election Week.
 - Thursday, February 16th – Optional Candidate interest meeting.
 - Wednesday, March 1st – Candidate Meeting 5:30 – potential candidates must attend.
 - Wednesday, March 8th – Appendices and other info due.
 - The senators expressed concern that SGA did not approve GSS's suggested election packet changes.
 - The election packet will be passed once and voted in the Undergraduate Senate. There will be no voting or opportunity for GSS. Only the overview will be presented once it is voted in the Undergraduate Senate.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

- Posted online for review.
- Please communicate any amendments to the executive committee.
- Minutes from the previous meeting were unanimously approved.

4. OFFICER REPORTS:

- President's Report by Shanlini:
 - Minors – There will be a change in the hours for minors
 - Must submit completion of certificate form from both department and Graduate School.
 - Completion of certificate information will now be added to a column on transcripts.
 - "Assistant" vs. "Associate" – The language has been differentiated between graduate teaching assistant and graduate teaching associate. It is in the new graduate catalog.
 - Plagiarism – new universal software for university that can be accessed both by the advisor and the department. After theses and dissertations are ran through the software, a certificate will be issued that will be sent to the Graduate School.
 - Immigration Ban – TK, Jamie, and Chris have been working to collect information on this and have been meeting with students. There have been issues with travel for some students, and others have also expressed concern with privacy issues.
 - Students should contact CIE with issues.
 - The 5K will be held on April 8th.

- Smokey's Closet – free professional clothes are given to graduate students. This will happen in Dunford Hall from 1-5PM on Monday, April 3 AND Wednesday, April 5.
- Talent Show – We are planning for a graduate talent show.
- Photo Shoot – During Graduate Appreciation Week. This will be happening in Hodges Library.
- February 27th – Chancellor's Round Table
- Dr. Cheek Appreciation – We are still planning on this.
- Shalini also requested feedback on Campus Climate Survey.
 - An important consideration after the fact would be to include information on freedom of speech, religious diversity, diversity on the right.
 - We have 11% current student completion on this survey. The goal is 30%.
- Vice President's Report by Tam'ra-Kay:
 - Advocacy page – We do have one at: advocacy.tn.edu
 - Senators and graduate students should stay abreast of bills that are being passed because some departments are already dealing with cuts in federal funding.
 - Social Justice and Mental Health Workshop on February 24th. Send this information out to your constituents.
 - Grants and Money Opportunities
 - New Sources of Funding – There are some Experience Learning grants that have just been released.
 - UT's quality enhancement plan through SACS is Experience Learning. You can \$3,500 for research, service learning, technology in the classroom, etc. At many schools, a new important focus is using evidenced-based strategies to promote inclusion. If you get one of these grants, include it on your CV. Organizations can also apply for \$2,000. Search "Experience Learning UTK" on the Internet for the link.
 - TN TLC – two types of faculty development grants are available:
 - Small technological changes in the classroom.
 - Major technological changes in the classroom.
 - OIT has teaching assistant grants for using technology in the classroom.
 - Check with each grant about whether the grant can go to someone who is a shared instructor in a class.
 - University Wide 3MT – Check with your respective colleges for more information and competition rules.
 - Think about whether you want to run for GSS next year and attend the informational session on March 1st if you are interested in running.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Zach:

- Plans for upcoming town hall meeting on March 22nd are underway.
- Encourage graduate students to come to this.
- It will be held March 22, 2017 in HBB 301.
- Communications and Outreach:
 - No updates.
- Equity & Diversity:
 - Committee has not recently met.
- Fundraising:
 - No updates since the last meeting. Still trying to get things together. The committee has received several responses from those willing to volunteer.
- Strategic Planning:
 - No updates.
- Travel Awards
 - Summer (May 1 – August 31, 2017) travel deadlines are upcoming.
 - College EHHS and A&S: April 10, 2017
 - All other colleges: April 17, 2017
 - Students are allowed one travel award per academic year.
 - Travel Award Workshop on March 28, 2017 at 6PM in HBB 301.
 - Kelly is leaving this position. If you are interested in filling this roll, please attend the Travel Workshop.
 - This will count as “grant administration” on one’s CV.
- An email is coming out soon to ask “How did you become a senator?” Please respond to this and the GSS would like to collect this information.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

- Teaching Department Graduate Student:
 - A graduate student has requested to speak with GSS senators. The student has been struggling with it taking months and months to get back feedback on comprehensive exams.
 - Another graduate student was removing from a teaching assistantship last year and explained that she was not allowed to challenge what she thought were false claims. Instead, she was placed in another role, but she felt that role did not further her career.
 - The question is proposed, “How do we create a Graduate Bill of Rights to protect our students?”
 - TK informed the GSS that the Office of Equity and Diversity takes care of graduate students’ rights as employees. A process should have been involved in these cases. The GSS can arrange the office to speak to us or a representative about these rights.
 - If you have concerns about establishing a Graduate Bill of Rights, there is consideration of forming an ad hoc committee. If anyone has any concerns or would like such a Bill of Rights, please express your ideas at: Bit.ly/GSSBill

- Survey Results:
 - Top 5 Goals:
 - A strategic plan is needed to tackle these.
 - GSS was split into groups to tackle these during the meeting to discuss these issues, strategies for handling them, and who could be invited to tackle these.
 - - Student Fees and Stipends – Suggestions:
 - There is a graduate student group that is conducting a survey on graduate stipends. The TN legislature is very aware that TN graduate students are some of the lowest paid.
 - The survey will look at different demographics, what kind of stipends students are getting, how much money is being borrowed. This will be distributed.
 - Compare data to other institutions.
 - Arts & Sciences is aware that stipends are low in comparison to the long-term goals of the university.
 - Possibly invite the new Chancellor to a GSS meeting to discuss this or talk about it at a town hall.
 - It is suggested that a committee be formed to address these issues. Stipends are variable by department.
 - Fee allocations, fee reductions, in-state residency.
 - Why are students incurring fees from certain technology departments when no special technology from that area is being used in the course.
 - We should look at what the poverty line is in Knoxville, add on fees, add a bit of “wiggle room,” and argue for that amount.
 - Campus Carry – Suggestions:
 - Work with the Faculty Senate to develop a co-sponsored bill.
 - Invite Chief Lane to speak.
 - This may just require political action and students contacting representatives.
 - GSS may be unable to affect policy on this, so is it a relevant issue on which to spend time?
 - Disseminate information on new policies and give students information on how to contact representatives concerning this.
 - There are mechanisms in place to make a legislative push on this.
 - Healthcare – Suggestions:
 - Get someone to update us on the changes happening with graduate student healthcare costs now that new legislation has happened.
 - Create a hub for information that tells what benefits are and are not included.

- Put a link to groups that are covering the Affordable Healthcare Act.
- Upper administration has been considering the idea that graduate students will not be allowed to access the UT Student Health Center.
- Private health insurance
- There is a link online to the TennCare Advocacy Program
- TA Training and Teaching Benefits – Suggestions:
 - TN TLC has information on TA training.
 - Knowing specifics on teaching loads graduate students are dealing with would be helpful. It would be good to collect information on this and look at the disparities between departments.
 - Ask Dr. McGaskey to help us on this.
- Diversity, Leave of Absence, Maternity Policy (tied with equal votes)
 - Diversity
 - Consider giving student organizations seats within GSS
 - Leave of Absence
 - Work with the Faculty Senate on leave of absence policies.
 - Maternity Policy
 - Work with the Faculty Senate on this, as well.
 - **GSS Senator requested that we please discuss these issues at the next GSS meeting since we really didn't get to these issues at this meeting.**