

Graduate Student Senate
January 31, 2012

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Approval of the minutes

IV. President's Report:

- A. The 20th annual "Love Your Libraries" 5K run will take place Saturday, March 3 at 9 AM. This GSS-hosted event benefits UT Libraries. Please make every effort to attend, and encourage your departments to participate (there is a team competition).
- B. The "money wall" will be removed now that the UC Garage and Lot 9 will soon be under construction. Todd spoke to the Vice-Chancellor for Finance, who said that the ATMs will probably be off-line by March 14th. The school has sent bids to financial institutions about installing ATMs in the University Center. We are not sure yet how protocol for fees will work for these new ATMs. More information on that should come in the future. In the meantime, the new ATMs should be installed and operational by the end of Spring Break.
- C. Students have been inquiring about new recreational space. The old graduate housing buildings on Sutherland Avenue are have been torn down. In their place, the university is building four natural and four artificial turf fields, some of which will hopefully be ready for use by fall 2012.
- D. The status of the "adopt-a-spot" program on campus has changed slightly. UT facilities are working on plans to maintain the spots more consistently.
- E. Areas of the campus along Lake Loudon are under construction to create a better entrance to the university.
- F. The Academic Policy Committee met to vote on creating a permanent policy for thesis/dissertation embargoes on Trace. This embargo should operate as a twelve-month hold on allowing a thesis or dissertation to be accessible online.
- G. The university is also considering revising admissions policies to allow students to send unofficial transcripts when applying to graduate school. Upon receiving an offer of admission, the student would then submit official documents. This should be more efficient and help reduce application costs.

V. Vice-President's Report:

- A. Will is now attending the meetings of the Student Government Association Student Senate.
- B. Will is also the contact for members wishing to volunteer for the "Love Your Libraries" 5K run.
- C. Will and Todd are also continuing to meet with departmental graduate student organizations on campus. Graduate students are encouraged to let Will and Todd know if they would like for them to attend a departmental organization meeting.

VI. Committee Reports:

- A. Equity and Diversity: The equity and diversity committee is pursuing a four-pronged approach towards improving diversity on campus.

1. Work with the administration to foster equality for LGBT groups. One specific problem is that domestic partners of graduate students are not able to receive benefits.
2. Create and implement ideas to make the campus more welcoming, specifically on graduate applications. Currently, there is not a section to indicate sexuality, and gender questions on the application can be confusing.
3. Foster more financial opportunities for minority and international students with fellowships, etc.
4. Research ways to streamline the process for granting and processing student visas for post-doc work.

B. "Love Your Libraries" 5K

1. First committee meeting February 1.

C. Travel Awards:

1. Revise application to be friendlier to graduate students who do different kinds of research and presentations, such as graduate students in the fine arts.
2. Include disclosure about departmental funding or funding through other grants on the application in order to prioritize applications coming from graduate students without any alternative funding.
3. Research unclaimed funds to address strategies for improving the percentage of funds that are claimed for reimbursement.
4. Streamline reimbursement process.

D. Communications and Outreach

1. Create a stronger social media presence for the GSS through a Facebook and/or Twitter account.
2. Work on organizing more social events and opportunities for students across departments to meet each other.

VII. Old Business

- A. The first GSS Town Hall went very well in the fall. Todd and Will are working on organizing another Town Hall for the spring semester. It will probably take place in March in the evening to allow more graduate students to participate. Todd is also hoping that more members from the administration, particularly representatives from Parking Services and Student Health, attend.
- B. The Program for Excellence and Equity in Research is organizing a symposium on Thursday, March 29th in the Alumni Memorial Building. The symposium's goal is giving graduate students awareness about organizations and opportunities on campus. The symposium has been structured around a keynote address followed by break-out sessions and panels. One of the panels is targeted towards graduate students regarding life after graduate school.
- C. PEER is also sponsoring a showing of PhD Comics on Wednesday, March 28th from 7:00-9:00.
- D. Todd and Will are working with the SGA as they revise the SGA constitution.
- E. The GSS is continuing to advocate for a permanent student leave policy. Currently, members of the GSS are researching top 25 and other peer institutions in order to learn what their policies. GSS will create a proposal.