



GSS Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 11, 2018

5:30 pm

HBB 103

Meeting called to order by Cara Sulyok (proxy for Johnny Richwine) at 5:31 pm; minutes recorded by Simon Rotzer

- I. Opening Remarks
 - A. Attendance
 1. Taken via QR code
 2. Present: 41 out of 46 senators filled-senator positions - meeting has a quorum
 3. Additional Guest: Dr. Dixie Thompson, Dean of the Graduate School
- II. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Wednesday, September 12, 2018
 1. One name had to be changed
 - B. Motion to accept (Michelle Parker), seconded (Jonathan Johnson), all in favor
- III. President's Report (Cara Sulyok)
 - A. Changes in Graduate Council
 1. Changes to Academic Probation Policy
 - a) Idea: Catch students a little earlier to help student success
 - b) Formerly: Students had to take 9 credit hours before academic probation
 - c) Now: Reduced to 3 credit hours
 - d) Graduate School is able to take a closer look at students earlier and provide notice and support before potential removal
 - B. One-time increase in GSS Travel Awards funding for this year (\$50,000)
 - C. Additionally, \$50,000 were given as a one-time award to help support students attending professional development opportunities - GSS Professional Development Travel Awards

1. Usually: Travel awards only for students to go to conferences to present original research; does not cover workshops

D. Wording-change for the Constitution and Bylaws

1. Introduced by the Legislation and Steering Committee
2. Departments/programs with more than 50 members (i.e. graduate students) are eligible for a second voting senator
 - a) Current senators are asked to help fill these positions, email Jack Ryan any additions (gss2@utk.edu)
 - b) Hoping to have all new senators at November Senate Meeting

IV. Committee Updates

A. Annual Fundraiser, Grace Pakeltis

1. Not much to present right now; meeting will be held next week
2. On the horizon:
 - a) For the November meeting: race route and supporting organization determined, figure out what needs to be outsourced to GSS (graphics, banners, etc.)

B. Equity & Diversity, Brandy Mmbaga

1. Had a meeting this past Monday
2. Future directions for the committee
 - a) Title IX

(1) Situation right now: mixed message: some departments do not make orientations mandatory, in 2017 orientation talked about the policy that faculty and students cannot have relationships (power difference), half of the people in the committee never heard about this

(2) Goals

(a) Increase knowledge on these issues; there is no “consensual” relationship between students and faculty

(b) Increase awareness through GSS

(3) Engage the Silent Circle

(4) Changes to current policies

(5) Emails that go out to inform the student body about incidents that happened on campus; create a website with follow up information (or text-messages)

(6) Bring out more knowledge about title IX, student and faculty, title IX training

(7) Comment (Dr. Thompson):

(a) Talk to Ashley Blamey, she would welcome pairing with GSS

(8) Comment (Brandy Mmbaga): Someone spoke with Jenny Richter; once we have more substance in our ideas, we could invite Ashley Blainey to our meeting

(9) Comment (Dr. Thompson): Jenny Richter is great, but she mostly deals with faculty issues; connecting with both is important

C. Legislation & Steering, Amanda McClellan

1. Worked on the Bylaws – more about that later

D. Programming & Events, Amanda Lake Heath

1. Today: October social occurred (Caffeine Bar)
 - a) In the future it would be nice to not have leftovers (38 people there, 10 senators, 28 students)
 - b) Programming & Events Committee asked the attendees which department they were from and how they found out - mostly informed through email from their senators!
 - c) Senators need to forward the emails from Cara Sulyok to respective departments; they are important and bring information to our constituents' attention
2. There are more events this October, send out the email now!
3. Committee meeting this Monday
 - a) Discussed events for November
4. If you have event ideas email Amanda Lake Heath (gssevents@utk.edu) even though you are not on the committee
5. Come to the events if you can, senators also get to enjoy them
6. Comment (Cara Sulyok): If students want emails directly, they can email Jack Ryan (gss2@utk.edu), there is an internal GSS listserv for graduate students that want them directly (without having to go through the senators)
7. Comment (Amanda Lake Heath): UTK GSS Facebook page includes information on upcoming events; join it!
8. Comment (Dr. Thompson): UTK Graduate School Facebook also includes important updates and events; pay attention to it!

E. Travel Awards, Michelle Parker

1. Finalized last round: 174 applications; 146 awarded with average award \$433
2. Working on updating the application and the process
 - a) Add line to the form for “advisor funding”
 - b) Remove requirement to print out the application; just turn in the cover sheet with total amounts of funding on it
3. Travel Workshop next Tuesday 5:30 102 HBB
 - a) Presentation on travel awards process
 - b) There will be pizza

- c) Comment (Cara Sulyok): It is good to know how travel awards work; it helps GSS senators to become more knowledgeable
- d) Questions (Brandy Mmbaga): Is there any way to come up with a handout on how to do travel awards:
 - (1) Answer (Cara Sulyok): That can already be found on the website under “Travel Awards”
- e) Comment (Michelle Parker):
 - (1) Lots of questions on abstract submission will be addressed (and changing) maybe in the future
 - (2) No funding handed out retroactively!!!
 - (3) Next deadline for travel awards is in November

V. New Business

A. Bylaws Updates

1. Chair of Legislation & Steering Committee (Amanda McClellan)

- a) Make sure that constitutions lines up with the bylaws!
 - (1) Before the process started the Bylaws were in relation to the SGA
 - (2) Now we have our own GPSA Constitution
 - (3) Committee spent a fair amount of time reading the constitution (double check, make sure everything lines up)
- b) Findings
 - (1) Irregularities (example): committee outlines in the Constitution are different from the outlines in the Bylaws
 - (2) Four committees are mentioned in the Constitution
 - (3) Voting requirements are confusing
 - (a) To establish a quorum 50% of eligible senators have to be present
 - (b) If you cannot be at the meeting in person for the vote you need to send a proxy
 - (c) Once we have a quorum, regular voting is a 50% majority, changes for bylaws require two-thirds majority
 - (d) Consequence: We need a lot of people present next meeting!
 - (e) Changes to the Constitution require a three-quarters vote
- c) Committee actions taken
 - (1) Cleaned up grammar, punctuation, and spelling issues
 - (2) Moved the Fundraising Committee to the Finance Committee

(3) Committee question: language to require a minimum of one bill from committees per year - Is this dangerous? Should it be changed?

2. Questions/discussions

a) Question (Dr. Thompson): Where is the travel awards committee in the constitution?

(1) Answer (Amanda McClellan): Can be found in the bylaws; it is an ad-hoc committee

b) Comment (Amanda McClellan):

(1) Finance Committee oversees the Annual Fundraiser now

(2) Committee tried to use language that is “may” and not “shall be” on purpose to accommodate for too few senators or unwilling GSS (e.g. no interest in fundraising)

c) Section B “ad-hoc” committees

(1) GSS does not currently have an Advisory Committee

(a) Meant for students who are not senators, but want to be involved

d) Committee tries to keep the Constitution and Bylaws open and interpretable to allow for maximum amount of freedom

e) Comment (Cara Sulyok): Can you explain the voting process for changing the constitution?

(1) Answer (Amanda McClellan): changes to the constitutions require two weeks’ notice; we get four weeks as of now

(2) Announcement: Bylaws will be voted on in the November meeting! This is the official notification!

f) Comment (Amanda McClellan): Constitution is rock solid; Bylaws need to be voted on twice (with two weeks’ notice); language needs to be changed to include electronic voting

g) Question (Ryan Gesme): Can we see the changes to the Constitution/Bylaws?

(1) Answer (Cara Sulyok): Old wording can be found on GSS website, new wording is in the agenda, Cara Sulyok will send out an email with everything

h) Comment (Amanda McClellan): Constitution supersedes the Bylaws; read both; Constitution needs to be voted on by the graduate student body

i) Comment (Amanda McClellan): If we have issues with changes or better changes, send them to Amanda McClellan; however, we need to keep the two weeks’ notice in mind

j) Question (unidentified): Is there a safeguard against filibustering?

- (1) Answer (Amanda McClellan): there are no explicit safeguards against that, but certain mechanisms are present right now
- (a) Two-thirds vote allows for suspension (needs no two weeks' notice)
- k) Comment (Jack Ryan): Stressed the importance of being here for voting
- (1) Necessary to maintain your status as a senator
- (2) You need to be present a certain amount of days to be considered a member of GSS - miss two meetings and will be removed
- (3) Comment (Cara Sulyok): Proxy counts as you being present
- l) Question (unidentified): If we are from a large department and only one of two people can come, will we still be considered present?
- (1) Answer (Jack Ryan): every voting member is considered separate
- (a) Just because you are entitled to have several senators does not mean you need to have them; GSS is just making sure that we have the opportunity
- m) Comment (Amanda McClellan): Constitution allows for having just one senator per department; Constitution also leaves it open to departments on how they choose the GSS senator
- n) Question (unidentified): Are departments required to have a second senator?
- (1) Answer (Amanda McClellan): They are not!
- o) Question (unidentified): If we have several seats, do we always have to be present?
- (1) Answer (Jack Ryan): If a seat is filled by a department, that seat needs to be present; every seat counts for itself
- p) Question (unidentified): What happens when a department loses a seat?
- (1) Answer (Amanda McClellan): The department needs to elect a new senator
- q) Question (unidentified): Can we change the process of how departments elect senators?
- (1) Answer (Cara Sulyok): Constitution allows for any method deemed necessary in each department; GSS can provide guidance
- r) Comment (Dr. Thompson): Maybe GSS can send out best practices

- s) Comment (Amanda McClellan): Committee thought about handing out procedural guidelines (best practice)

B. Judiciary Committee Appointments

1. Explanation (Cara Sulyok)
 - a) Judiciary Committee is a permanent committee (per Constitution)
 - b) Main purpose: act as “checks and balances” (keep Executive Committee in line); second eyes on the changes of the Bylaws
2. To do now: elect four senators for the committee (Justices)
 - a) Review changes to the Constitution and Bylaws and determine if they are in line with each other
 - b) Three permanent Justices with one alternate
 - c) Main duties begin after Bylaws are passed (January meeting)
3. Interested
 - a) Brandy Mmbaga
 - b) Baylee Jarrell
 - c) Sue Choi
 - d) Frankie McGinnis (not present, but nominated by Michelle Parker)
4. Question (Cara Sulyok): Any complaints about the nominees?
5. Comment (Amanda McClellan): School of Law has a second senator, do they want to have a say too?
 - a) Answer (Proxy for School of Law): School of Law will talk about it during its next meeting
6. Vote: Two-thirds majority required vote
 - a) Secretary (Simon Rotzer): reads out the names of the four nominees
 - b) All senators are in favor, nobody abstained – Justices are voted into office!

C. Graduate Student Senate Advisory Committee

1. Explanation (Cara Sulyok): this committee needs to be chaired by a senator and then consist of non-voting members; right now, we only have one non-voting member serving on the Programming & Events Committee; a second non-senator announced an interest today; there appears to be little interest, but the committee is still important
2. Questions (Cara Sulyok): What are your thoughts? Is anyone interested in chairing this committee?
3. Question (unidentified): Should non-voting members not talk to (go through) their senators?
 - a) Answer (Cara Sulyok): In previous years there were people interested to getting involved with GSS even though they were not elected
4. Comment (Jack Ryan): Cautions interested chairs, especially since many departments will get another senator

5. Question (Cara Sulyok): Am I right to assume that we do not want to move forward with an advisory committee?
 - a) Answer (many): Yes
6. Question (Cara Sulyok): What should we do with this committee in the Bylaws? Leave it in or get rid of it?
 - a) Answer (Baylee Jarrell): leave it in there
 - b) Answer (Amanda McClellan): leave it in there
7. Question (Amanda Lake Heath): Are other committees open to non-members?
 - a) Answer (Amanda McClellan): standing committees require people to be members of GSS only, ad-hoc committees do not have the same language (at this point)
8. Comment (Amanda Lake Heath): having non-senate members on certain committees might be a good idea to keep non-senators interested
9. Comment (Cara Sulyok): We should not allow non-senators in the Travel Awards committee
10. Question (Amanda McClellan): Should we add that language to the committee?
11. Vote suggested:
 - a) Should there be language in the Bylaw proposal that says you need to be a senator to be on the Travel Awards committee?
 - b) All in favor, nobody abstained; language will be added to the Bylaws

D. Professional Development Awards

1. Explanation (Cara Sulyok):
 - a) No guarantee that this is how the proposal will end up
 - b) Cara Sulyok and Jack Ryan are writing the proposal; they used language from the GSS website and made changes that were necessary
2. Question (Cara Sulyok): Our idea of workshops might be different from other disciplines, so what is a professional development opportunity?
 - a) Comment (Michael Phillips): For Earth and Planetary Sciences it is conferences with scientific findings; workshops on technology (that augments your ability to do science)
 - b) Comment (Jenn Summers): It might be abused for field-work (e.g. collecting data in the field or gas money); proposal needs to include phrasing to prevent this
 - c) Comment (Anthropology): Many workshops are offered by outside institutions
 - d) Comment (Geography): “field week”: lab work and analysis, work with experts, skills that help us develop professionally

- e) Comment (Dr. Thompson): In the application: have the applicant articulate the professional skills they want to gain through this experience
 - f) Comment (Ryan Gesme): History can profit from language classes, usually week-long
 - g) Comment (Amanda McClellan): College of Social work offers many opportunities: new treatments, research, best practices
 - h) Comment (Stefan Slavov): Keep it broad and figure out what constitutes high and low rank
 - i) Comment (Cara Sulyok): Needs to be a tangible skill, collecting data, learning how to program, etc.
3. Question (Cara Sulyok): Do people agree that it would be that?
 4. Question (Jack Ryan): Travel awards for presenting research at a conference: do conferences count too?
 5. Question (Michelle Parker): Is “travelling” important? Information sciences has many online opportunities. Are we including these as well?
 6. Question (Geography): How do we make clear the connection to our field in which we want to do our research?
 7. Question (Cara Sulyok): What about courses that are not offered here? Will those be considered?
 8. Question (unidentified): What about classes for college credit? – Will there be grey areas?
 9. Question (unidentified): Should attending conferences with no research to present should be funded? – He says no! That is not professional development
 10. Question (unidentified): For the sciences: there are workshops on how new medical devices are being used; is this fundable?
 11. Comment (Sue Choi): Concerning professional conferences: what about soft-skill experiences? They are not a tangible skill. Can we consider those?
 12. Question (Brandy Mmbaga): Conferences with pre-conference workshops are good for professional development. Should we consider conferences as being part of professional development? They are improving the extent of your research. What about professional development for people who are not researchers? Their professional development will look differently!
 13. Question (Michelle Parker): A lot of conferences have workshops throughout the whole conference (e.g. speed dating for jobs); can that be considered for funding?
 14. Question (Brandy Mmbaga): How about conferences that act as job fairs?
 15. Comment (unidentified): They can all be considered tangible.
 16. Question (Amanda McClellan): Do we need to establish an ad-hoc committee to establish procedures for the professional travel awards?

17. Comments tabled (Cara Sulyok): If there is something we did not discuss, email Cara Sulyok directly; she will work with Jack Ryan and Dr. Thompson on the proposal; they will keep us updated; they are also working on how it will be read and who will be reading it.
18. Comment (Jack Ryan): We are working on a tight timeframe; money needs to go
19. Comment (Dr. Thompson): The reason for this: money is here right now, because people were talking/requesting it last year; it is non-recurring money and has to be spent; however, if we demonstrate a real need for this Dr. Thompson can go to the Provost with it; hope: make it more permanent
20. Comment (Cara Sulyok): Applications are graded based on the travel awards grading
21. Comment (unidentified): We might need experts from the field to establish whether certificate or skills is worth more than a soft skill
22. Comment (Dr. Thompson): There needs to be a scale for whether student gets money; another one for how much money they get
23. Comment (unidentified): Make it mandatory to articulate your goals in an essay; it is hard to grade but payoff might be worth it
24. Comment (Brandy Mmbaga; Jack Ryan): Definition of professional development needs to be worked out first
25. Comment (unidentified): Essay portion-element is already in use; more focus needed on abstract, less on essay portion
26. Comment (unidentified): Aspects could be weighted differently: maybe we can consider frequency in which the workshop happens
27. Question (Sue Choi): Does this committee go into the bylaws?
 - a) Answer (unidentified): Not necessarily
28. Comment (Dr. Thompson): Chances are that the committee may only be a one-time thing
29. Comment (Cara Sulyok): We have to show that it works and that it is needed more often
30. Question (unidentified): Can the point-system for the application be changed?
31. Comment (Cara Sulyok): If you think of anything post-meeting, email Cara Sulyok directly
32. Question (Amanda McClellan): Will you send us this information until the next time?
 - a) Answer (Dr. Thompson): The nature of this is that everything needs to be on the fly; if we do it this way this year and it is a bust, we will try it differently next year; this year, we have to move

E. Other business:

1. Question (Ryan Gesme): Are there any updates on the stipend situation?

- a) Answer (Dr. Thompson): The Graduate School received updated spreadsheets from the colleges last week; data was cleaned and merged; meeting with finances and administration officials tomorrow; decisions should be made and given to college deans by the end of October; money will be paid back for the beginning of the semester
2. Comment (Cara Sulyok): SGA put up a bill to have undergraduates use law library all night; could be potential issue for graduate students; we will have a different bill to counter; actual bill was tabled in SGA

VI. Adjournment:

- A. Motion to adjourn (Michelle Parker), seconded (Amanda McClellan), all in favor
- B. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 14 at 5:30 pm in HBB 103