



GSS Meeting

Tuesday, October 15, 2019, 6:00 pm
Student Union, Room 169

Meeting called to order by Elina Geut at 6:02pm; minutes recorded by Simon Rotzer

1. Opening Remarks
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Attendance
 - i. Taken via QR-code; alternatively: tiny.utk.edu/GSSOct2019
 - ii. Present: 59 out of 73 filled-senator positions – meeting has a quorum
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes
 - a. Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 18th, 2019
 - b. Motion to approve (Jonathan Kubesch), second (Andrew Putt); all in favor
3. Guest Speaker
 - a. Dr. Ashley Blamey not present, because of sickness, David Willis will talk instead
 - i. Dr. Blamey sat in committee with me; what she synthesized and did was amazing
 - ii. Thank you for answering the survey; we are looking at everything; this issue is one we wanted to address: power. Power that graduate students do not have in GRA, GTA, and as a graduate student. Sexual misconduct is unacceptable and to combat the power that can be manipulated, we must take a proactive stance, not a reactive stance. This means that we address the culture of the university. Here is where Ashley does an outstanding job. A great leader going beyond the call of duty. Sometimes power is taken away from graduate students; our goal is to restore power back to them; she is doing that daily, working so hard to restore it; not just when it happens to us, but others too; when we hear something we should say something; she is sick today, but we will reschedule
 - b. Dean Thompson
 - i. Thank you all for being here tonight; thank you for commitment towards graduate and professional students; you serve an important role by bringing attention to important issues, but also taking them back to departments; thank you; one of the things that higher ed is built on is higher governance; you are participating in that; thank you
 - ii. First there will be a few comments and then time for questions
 1. David and Sue, I would like to see the summary of the survey results so that I can understand which issues are bubbling up

2. One of the few things I observed working with the new Chancellor and Provost is their support for graduate student education; I hope there will be opportunities to have you hear from them sometime later this year
3. Another great partner: University Library
 - a. How many went to the opening to Graduate Commons?
 - i. Hope you take the opportunity to go there and enjoy them and go there to work;
 - ii. You will need your ID to get in so its exclusive for graduate students
4. Something else I would like you all to do:
 - a. Follow the Graduate School on social media (Twitter and Facebook); important announcements go out that way; but we know that people use social media so please follow us
5. Something else that is new this year: Professional Development Framework
 - a. New students attending orientation heard about it
 - b. What we did is: you know that different organizations have different trainings, e.g.: library: how to endnote; career center: how to do career-related things; now we have a "one-off"-system; graduate school brought those services and offers together to form a cohesive group that will share common message information about professional development opportunities
 - c. What I ask David and Sue to do is have Dr. Earnest Brothers come here and have him talk about this organization; Best Practices in Teaching is a good example
 - d. Teaching and Learning Innovation has certificate programs for developing teaching skills; Office of Research Development is also a good source
 - e. The Graduate School put all of these things in the calendar
 - f. You will not learn everything from the department, this is another way for you to do that
 - g. Maybe in an email share the link to the Office of Graduate Training and Mentorship
6. David Willis mentioned the task force he and I worked on with Dr. Ashley Blamey; it was charged in August by Chancellor Plowman to look into issues with sexual harassment; charged with particularly paying attention to circumstances in which graduate students may be the victims; a set of recommendations came out:
 - a. Standing working group to check that policy and procedures are clearly written and well disseminated, so

- that people know where policies and resources are when they find themselves in a difficult situation
- b. Making sure that reporting mechanisms are well known so that people know how to get help for themselves or others
 - c. GTAs will get an email with an intro from the Dean, the main body will receive an email from Dr. Blamey; it will point you to mandatory reporter training;
 - i. If you are a GTA or GRA: if a student comes to you and reports that they have been a victim you are a mandatory reporter;
 - ii. Short training with 15 minutes or less, but it points you to the right resources; if you get the link please participate; very easy to do; you will find it quite useful
 - d. More to come when Dr. Blamey speaks at GSS; she will lay out more information from the committee that is currently being formed
7. Now – drumroll please – everybody has been waiting for Professional Development Travel Awards for the 2019/2020 school year; yes, they will happen! Last year \$50,000 now \$75,000; process will be much the same; just received the information; we will use a similar process and tweak it a bit; will get that information out to you soon; happy to have that money and support your professional development
8. Questions:
- a. Derek Boyd: Can we use the funds for summer travel?
 - i. Answer (Dean Thompson): No; since we are using carryover funds we need to disperse them by the end of may
 - b. Anthony Geist: What is the expected time frame?
 - i. Answer (Dean Thompson): We will get it out in one week
 - 1. Question (Sue Choi): Is this public knowledge?
 - 2. Answer (Dean Thompson): Yes, but time frame is to be determined; the availability of funds can be shared; once details are ironed out, we will use social media to get info out
 - c. David Willis: In programs where they do not have proxies already assigned is there a better way of getting a proxy?
 - i. Answer (Dean Thompson): No set mechanism, can be as easy as asking someone; every department has a different process

- ii. Comment (Andre Graves): In one department we had a PhD student who went to Germany so there was confusion on how to handle it
 - 1. Answer (Dean Thompson): So they found an internal way; if the elected officer can not be there, just find somebody else and let GSS know
 - a. Comment (Andre Graves): So just keep an email trail
- iii. Question (Elizabeth O'Connell): The issue might be with departments having exams at night where all graduate students must be there; can we have an exception for this issue so that we can get out of the mandatory requirement for being here?
 - 1. Answer (Dean Thompson): Sounds like this is getting at the rule that you are out after two misses; exception could probably be made
 - 2. One thing I encourage this body to do is to address the meeting time; there is not one meeting time that does work for everybody
- d. Chloe Sandoval: We have an issue with access to mental health care, is that a priority for the Graduate School? I am talking about access to (mental) health care.
 - i. Answer (Dean Thompson): That is an issue we talk about a lot with faculty, administrators, and students; I encourage everybody to take advantage of the resources we have here; call 971-HELP; they can direct you to the right resources, also Graduate School; group "active minds": working to make sure that students across campus know what resources they have; Graduate School is working on getting that info out as well
 - ii. Follow-up (Chloe Sandoval): Are they looking into provide more?
 - 1. Answer (Dean Thompson): The office of student life is where those resources reside; the Provost has discussed that; I report to him; I talk to my boss who talks to his colleague who talks to the chancellor; this is in the process; what is the problem?

2. Comment (Chloe Sandoval): I will share a personal story: I have a PhD and only time to get therapy once here before I am done; there are only two groups for graduate students and if you know somebody you cannot participate; I had a crisis and was not be able to be seen by a counselor in over a month; it might be good to have a counselor exclusively for graduate students, or remove restrictions for graduate students with ADD so they can get treatment here without going somewhere else
3. Comment (Dean Thompson): I will engage in conversations tomorrow to see what we can do and if there are resources; it is an important issue; one thing I must say to all of you: if you are having trouble getting access to resources it would help me advocate for you if I knew more about the difficulties you have; if you share those issues with me I can advocate for additional resources
 - a. I am happy to talk about it more; just send me an email to gradschooldean@utk.edu
 - b. Comment (Katharine Ryan): As a member of the Equity and Diversity Committee: we would be happy to coordinate with you
 - i. Comment (Dean Thompson): Great! Please outline the issues and share them with me
- iii. Comment (Stacie Beach): I wanted to add to that: obviously this is a body for representing graduate students; my own experiences made me realize that we need more resources for all students; problem with waiting times: when you go to the health center they will automatically refer you out because they are so overworked; it is easier for them; I think this speaks to a larger issue
- e. Ashlyn Schwartz: Are there any plans to address workplace bullying?

- i. Answer (Dean Thompson): I know about a task force from human resources and the Provost; I am not involved though
 - f. Andrew Putt: Is there an email or adhoc-group you want to assign to this? It was a big issue last year; we could pick up
 - i. A student in our department got injured over the weekend earlier this year and went to a different clinic, then noticed that our out-of-network out-of-pocket is too expensive; is there anything else we can do about that? We are thankful for everything else we are getting like dental
 - ii. Answer (Dean Thompson): This is done by the Division of Student Life; we were able to make some progress on a couple of issues; but the deductible-issue comes up often; one of the issues that came to light is making sure that students know not to use the emergency room when not necessary
 - iii. Comment (Chloe Sandoval): We are required to get a referral when we go anywhere
 - 1. Answer (Dean Thompson): You can go to an emergency care center; it is not the same, but less costly
 - 2. Comment (Andrew Putt): Information on the website could be made clear: right now it says; go to UT ER; maybe clarify that
 - 3. Follow-Up (Jonathan Kubesch): Clarification is necessary; that was explained to us at orientation; it is part of graduate student life that you are at risk of higher mental issues; this negates the benefits
 - iv. Question (Derek Boyd): To clarify: were you asking for an adhoc-committee for mental health or bullying?
 - 1. Answer (Andrew Putt): It was a response to mental health; that was a big issue last year
 - g. Dean Thompson: Thank you all; as I mentioned before you can always email me at gradschooldean@utk.edu or through the Graduate School

4. President's Report

- a. David Willis, GSS President

- i. Thank you for the survey; we are looking at themes; one thing we are doing is trying to put together a document for each position; not only for the GSS, but also for internal external committees; “What do I need to do?” – if you want to go ahead writing down what you are doing right now that would be great; everything helps
 - ii. Other area: power
 - 1. We will address that next month when Dr. Blamey will be here
 - 2. I participated in the Associate Dean’s meeting about the travel awards; paperless applications were received very well; addressing the concerns was done successfully; if anyone has concerns just let me know; we need a short video for the advisors (2 or 3 minutes)
 - iii. Alexander Carter received a research grant, so he is resigning from his position; we do have an opening for the Technology Officer; open up the internal committee
 - 1. Comment (Sue Choi): it is a lot of back-end stuff, e.g. preparing the power points; if you are interested in social media that would be your chance; promote GSS
 - 2. Comment (David Willis): me and sue do a lot; right now: I am doing the power points, Sue is doing the website, so we can share the workload: anybody want to volunteer? – pause = nobody; so next let us come back to that during our next meeting
- 5. Committee Reports (Goals and Objectives)
 - a. David Willis: Sue and I tasked every committee to come up with goals and objectives for this year
 - b. Equity and Diversity, Derek Boyd
 - i. Aim is to strive to represent students and have an equitable and safe environment to live
 - ii. Three main objectives
 - 1. Representation, communication, and organization
 - a. Representing the student body; that involves engagement with other bodies; so that tissues get communicated to the right people
 - b. Making sure that GSS is communicating with each other about those issues and that they are open to their constituents; we love to hear from you; making sure that everyone who needs mental healthcare gets it; please bring things to us; when events happen on campus we would issue statements; we voice the opinions of graduate students, so look out for those
 - c. Organization: malleable and open to diversity on campus; Community Day at the Rock; happens a lot with different organization; let us know if you have ideas on events you want to see on campus, maybe health resources; we are open to that, maybe we can get an email account; we will get you an update on that

- i. Comment (David Willis): Probably in two weeks
- d. Question (Jonathan Kubesch): Is the speaker aware of the Bias Assessment Response team? That would be great. Also: UTIA-UTK unification: what are you doing to address integration of the student communities (especially the AG-campus)?
 - i. Answer (Derek Boyd): Thanks for bringing that up; we are not aware of that right now; but once we the email is up we are open ears
- e. Question (Andrew Putt): There are several departments that are currently working to get their own student-led diversity groups; some work, some have issues; number one issue we are finding is a reporting system: when something happens, having something to try find resolutions to things; would your organization be willing to tackle that?
 - i. Answer (Derek Boyd): Definitely; we have substructures right now that address that, but we also have fluidity there so that people with interest can do that; everyone on the committee is equal; if somebody is more experienced they can tackle the issues; short answer: we are working on it; long answer: I do not know if we can work on a filtering system; at this point: give us the information
 - ii. Comment (Claire Mayo): I do not know if this can help: departments with own diversity organizations; Chancellor Plowman spoke to people, discussing how only three schools have diversity offices and they are planning to expand that to where every school and department has a diversity officer to deal with issues on these levels; is that the question you were asking?
 - iii. Answer (Andrew Putt): yes, that would be a great resource to be available
 - iv. Comment (Derek Boyd): my own department is also working on that so that will help, in the meantime just make sure to listen to each other; looks like there is something in the pipeline
 - v. Comment (Dean Thompson): Graduate School is open to when those issues come up; there was an issue that emerged earlier this fall: trying to work and bring people together; we might not always the group that can bring a solution, but we can help you find the right people

- vi. Comment (Elizabeth O'Connell): Psychology has a portal already set up where those things can be discussed anonymously
 - vii. Comment (Chloe Sandoval): our department had issues like that; ended up talking to our department head and he did not know about the issues, but he was open to suggestion; so the head of your department might be a good person to talk to
 - viii. Comment (Kathrine Ryan): response to all of this: standardize resources (training, officers all over); maybe forming a university group where students responsible for that can meet; maybe introduce a general reporting system so we can coordinate; that might be something worth pursuing
 - ix. Question (Anthony Geist): Until the complaint email is set up, should we just contact you?
 - 1. Answer (Derek Boyd): Yes! My email is dboyd15@vols.utk.edu
 - 2. Comment (Dean Thompson): bias.utk.edu is also a good resource; you can also report bias there
- c. Legislative Steering, Austin Boyd
- i. Meet two Fridays ago for first meeting; reviewing the constitution and bylaws for GSS; in general, we wanted to see what oversights or issues there are with the documents;
 - 1. A lot of things, but also proxy issue so that it is addressed and in the rules; how to deal with it and how to get around it
 - 2. Biggest thing: amendment to the constitution: fairly large deal; this issue pertains to all of us; currently: it is a lengthy process to amend the bylaws: present changes in one meeting; vote in another meeting; then another meeting; we cannot begin the process before the second meeting, goal: make it less difficult to make changes to our bylaws; if we do not get the votes we would have to give it another try in the spring; makes it hard to change things; this will be coming around in the November meeting, we will vote and amend the constitution;
 - 3. Beyond that: we have the idea to create a living document on "what does my position do?" so that new senators know what they are supposed to do; that way you do not have to learn it on the fly; we are hoping to start that process before the next meeting; more information soon about that; this will not be an amendment, but will be something that will be put up on the website so that people can see what they are supposed to be doing;
 - 4. Questions:

- a. Jonathan Kubesch: This is a tight schedule. How are we doing it?
 - i. Answer (Austin Boyd): We will start next month, we will have to do a ballot in our meeting first; the amendments to the bylaws will have to be made during the current bylaws; we could have a secondary vote in spring, but only if we can vote on it twice (December and January), if we do not pass it the first time then there is a good chance that the proposal will die and we will have to do it next year;
- b. Anthony Geist: Are we considering this the proposal to change the constitution?
 - i. Answer (Austin Boyd): An amendment is coming; you will receive it in digital form, we need a 75% majority on that and then it moves to the graduate student body; different from bylaws
 - ii. Comment (Sue Choi): we do not have a December meeting
 - iii. Comment (Dean Thompson): but you could meet in the spring, you have five meetings left
 - iv. Comment (Austin Boyd): we need to vote on them by November otherwise it will not work, things need to be done
 - v. Motion to give this topic special significance for the next meeting (Jonathan Kubesch); second (Surendra Singh); all in favor
 - 1. Alternatively: mark it so that it gets done next year
- d. Programming and Events, Joshua Williams
 - i. Met last week
 - ii. Goals are
 - 1. Quality programming events to increase
 - 2. Events to bring people together; graduate students tend to work in their own little cells
 - 3. Spring: Town Hall to address issues that important for graduate students
 - 4. Events for planned right now
 - a. Sunspot Social for all of GSS ("Senator Social")
 - b. Graduate Student Ice Bears game – help sponsor tickets or food; we did not hear back, once we get confirmation, we will let you know
 - 5. Spring:
 - a. Event on the Rock to bring graduate students together
 - b. Town Hall: mental health seems to be a big thing
 - c. Question (Andrew Putt): Did we officially vote and accept the chair for programming and events?

1. Elizabeth O'Connell is on that committee; time commitment 1 ½ hours; really cool stuff, listen to what you say
 2. Amelia Ahles would like to volunteer
 - a. Motion to nominate (Andrew Heim); second (Jonathan Kubesch); all in favor
7. Confirmation of External Committee Appointments
- a. Annual Fundraiser Chair
 - i. Tabled (decided previously)
 - b. SPSF Programming Student Advisory Board Committee
 - i. Appointee: Deb Acharyya
 1. Motion to confirm (Jonathan Kubesch); second Claire Mayo; all in favor
 - c. Library Committee
 - i. Appointee: Chelsea Jacobs
 1. Motion to confirm (Aidan Sweeney 16b or Alex Doyle 60b); second (unintelligible); all in favor
 - d. Research Committee
 - i. Appointee: Wesley Lamberson
 1. Motion to confirm (Jonathan Kubesch); second (Derek Boyd); all in favor
 - e. Calendar Committee
 - i. Appointee: Nicholas Sarafolean
 1. Motion to confirm (Jonathan Kubesch); second (Derek Boyd); all in favor
 - f. Comment (David Willis): If you have something to report, then let us know; if you have issues then let us know as well
8. New Business
- a. Senate Discussion and Proposals
 - i. Motion to start adhoc-committee for discussion of mental health (Andrew Putt); second (Jonathan Kubesch); all in favor
 1. Question (Derek Boyd): What does that mean? Are we getting a new committee? Do you want Equity and Diversity do that?
 - ii. Chole Sandoval volunteers to head the committee
 1. Motion to appoint (Derek Boyd); second (Jonathan Kubesch); all in favor
 - iii. Comment (David Willis): we will work on that together; other committees are welcome
 - iv. Question (Austin Boyd): Is there a need for another adhoc-committee for professional development?
 1. Answer (Sue Choi): let us know; we will keep you informed about that
 - v. Comment (David Willis): I want to thank Dean Thompson for being here today
9. Internal Committee Meetings
- a. Annual Fundraiser
 - b. Equality & Diversity
 - c. Legislation & Steering

- d. Programming & Events
- e. Travel Awards
- 10. Adjournment, at 7:28PM
 - a. Motion to adjourn (Andrew Putt); second (Jonathan Kubesch); all in favor; meeting adjourned

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 13th, 2019 at 6:00 pm in SU169