



GSS Meeting

Thursday, January 09th, 2020, 6:00 pm
Student Union, Room 169

Meeting called to order by Elina Geut at 6:01pm; minutes recorded by Simon Rotzer

1. Opening Remarks
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Attendance
 - i. Taken via QR-code; alternatively: tiny.utk.edu/GSSJan2020
 - ii. Present: 59 out of 75 filled-senator positions – meeting has a quorum
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes
 - a. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 13, 2019
 - b. Motion to approve (Jonathan Kubesch), second (Deb Acharyya); all in favor
3. President's Report
 - a. David Willis, GSS President
 - i. Addressing Zoom/Distance Education
 1. When Sue Choi and I ran we ran on several issues, inclusion and diversity was a major one; Therefore, to hold true to our goals we looked at distance education, and it was not included; we had many discussions; we do not want to open Pandora's box; there will be no zooming in when you cannot be here; but if you do distance education you can still be a part; we are now working on a solution to that; opposing viewpoints?
 2. Question (Jonathan Kubesch): Do you have any thoughts on the proxy discussion? Do we still go through the proxy?
 - a. Answer (David Willis): great questions; let's take it one step at a time; let's do this issue first; it is more important
 - ii. Action Collaborative Meeting Report
 1. Going smoothly; four different areas; right now working with Vice Chancellor for Equity and Diversity; Dean Thompson is in all the groups; I love the facts that it is a collaboration of schools across the nation; making sure what sexual abuse sexual violence is and working on Title IX in general
 2. Had a roundtable with Chancellor; talked about fees and how they annoy us; it went well; overall theme is going back to mental health; making sure we are heard; diverse landscape
 - iii. Cookies with the Dean
 1. Went really well

2. Comment (Dean Thompson): one of the things that is really important to me is having opportunities to hear from graduate and professional students; once a month I set up some time in the Graduate Commons; listed on the Graduate School website and social media; next one: January 27th, 10:00 am to 11:30am; any topic goes; any issues you are facing; one thing: I know how it was to be a TA 30 years ago, but I do not know how it is now; share stories: someone came and shared how wonderful her new program is; wherever it is on the spectrum, I want to hear about it
 3. Question (Brandy McConkey): You are posting it on social media outlets, but are there plans of creating flyers we can post?
 - a. Answer (Dean Thompson): contact Dr. Hendricks; he has them in a multitude of ways to share; when we send the info out to the Directors of Graduate Studies there will be a flyer
 4. Question (Chloe Sandoval): Will there be an email sent out we can forward?
 - a. Answer (Dean Thompson): there will be one, but best way would be to have GSS do that
 - b. Comment (David Willis): we will send out an email with the flyer attached
 5. If somebody just wants to stop by, say hello, and have a cookie, that is fine with me
- iv. Ombudsperson
1. Talking about mental health a lot; trying to find the best avenue; in business this would be a person to reach out when you have an issue with a colleague or a boss; we are TAs and face power differences
 2. Lisa Yamagata-Lynch: her job is to listen to concerns; same rules apply as a counselor; if you say you are suicidal she has to report; otherwise a safe space to express yourself; sometimes you just have to talk about it, get it off your chest; during discussions I had with her I noticed: she actively listens;
 - a. Her email is: lisayl@utk.edu
 - b. Her website: ombuds.utk.edu
 - i. If you think of anything, email me or her
 3. Comment (Dean Thompson): one of the things she is good at is thinking you through options, resources or stuff; I encourage you to share this information with your colleagues
- v. Question (Andrew Putt): Did you talk about the Vice Chancellor search committee?
1. Answer (David Willis): I did not; there was a meeting about the Vice Chancellor of Student Life; Carilli is resigning; we had an open forum and it went well

- a. Question: What do we want in a person? Are our voices heard? If anybody has anything a VP should have please email me and I will make sure you are heard
 2. Question (Chloe Sandoval): The Mental Health committee wanted to meet with the VP before he stepped down; that did not happen; can we schedule a meeting with the search committee?
 - a. Answer (David Willis): Let's have a one-on-one discussion on that
 3. Question (Deb Acharyya): With Dr Carilli gone, will we still be meeting with the SPSF Student Programming Board?
 - a. Answer (David Willis): Yes
 - b. Comment (Natalie Campbell – Student Body President): meeting at the end of February with all the people; we will then set up a schedule for the rest of the semester
4. Guest Speaker: The University of Tennessee Chancellor, Donde Plowman
 - a. Happy to see how many of you are here, thank you for being involved
 - b. I want you to know that graduate students and graduate education is a major part of how I see our university moving forward and doing better things; we want to be a university that has distinction and whose research is changing life and making life better; grad students are part of that; I wanted to thank you for what to do
 - c. I am like your Dean here: back when I was a graduate student, it was the best time of my life; I admire you for doing what you do, I would not have done it; right now I tend to use your elected officials to get your voices; I want to hear what graduate students do; one thing: pay better stipends; second topic: better health insurance;
 - d. A couple of things I am thinking about the university:
 - i. Been on the job for a few months, but when am I not new again? one year?; I was in management: every organization has its own code or culture; for a year you are bumping up when you are new; that is the value of being new; after a year you become one of the people; always said jokingly: my most value is bumping up the code; Tennessee is lucky to have this university
 - ii. State of education in Tennessee is incredibly; making undergrad education available for everyone
 - iii. People ask me about my vision, but I am putting off the question; instead: Strategic Vision Committee: how do we see ourselves in the future? I believe the only way of moving to the next level is not doing what others did, but using their own strengths; unique strengths here at UT:
 1. One of them: we sit here in the Oak Ridge Corridor; I cannot think of another university that has access to a national lab like that; you do not have to be affiliated to use the advantages; hoping the grow the number of doctoral students by 300; you are important part of the process, leveraging our strength;

2. The other thing we have: we are the volunteers; talk about that all the time; being a vol means something; what does it mean a Gator? - nothing;
 - a. People in Nebraska always asked: why do they call themselves Vols? They did not know the history; President needed a few thousand soldiers, TN gave them 30,000, people step forward when they are needed; in the future when you are working people see your Power T; people ask you what you did and how you made a difference in your life; I want everyone to have had the chance to make this world better;
- iv. Happy to make a difference with making people feel like they belong; graduate students: I know the situation you are in: one hour you are the student, then the other hour you are the teacher; you have a uniquely challenging role; try to enjoy that not worry about that; it is true that we ask a lot of you
- v. How many of you are in a classroom? To your students you are the University of Tennessee; you are Donde Plowman, you are a volunteer; to them you are the teacher a role model, a mentor; you have the opportunity to shape somebody; leadership is a simple concept, but not easy to do: willingness to act and step forward; so if you see something step forward and say do not do that; if you see a problem point it out, if you have a suggestion idea; step forward and talk about it; to the students you are the leader of this class; they are looking at you as someone to shape them by your presence and the way you are carrying yourself; proud of everyone of you: you are a role model; I encourage you to take advantage of all the resources that are here; when I look back at my time in school I wish I had taken more advantage of the resources
- vi. Connecting to you through David Willis; office hours again this year; every Tuesday at 4-5PM; just stop by; just stop by and introduce yourself; bring me a problem or a solution
- vii. Questions
 1. Question (Simon Rotzer): You talk about increasing the stipends. Are there any concrete plans?
 - a. Answer (Chancellor Plowman): Provost is working on it; no concrete steps; no classroom nationwide where graduate students do not complain about stipends; differs by program; open to suggestions, if you put some together
 2. Question (Chloe Sandoval): Are there any resources for mental health care in the plan?
 - a. Answer (Chancellor Plowman): There is so much we need to do; we cannot just hire counsellors; some ideas I have thought about; things I would like to see: 1) could we not make grad school easier for students by offering them housing as well? Need to think about availability;

- want to get somewhere where we can train faculty and grad students, etc. to recognize signs of stress; training and education would be huge; graduate student have unique stresses that others do not have; it is a high priority and a high priority in the whole university system; there are a few things we can do and do them quickly; you can put something together
- b. Comment (David Willis): we have an ad hoc committee for this
 - c. Comment (Chancellor Plowman): we should do a round table
 - d. Comment (Chloe Sandoval): we have collected qualitative data
 - e. Comment (Chancellor Plowman): I am proud of this generation that says: hey! we need mental health care
3. Comment (Deb Acharyya): Women's representation in the STEM fields is a topic that increases in importance. I think our university can have more targeted events that cater to that question, talk to people in the field; have a discussion
 - a. Comment (Chancellor Plowman): I completely agree with you; just met with an engineering company hiring more women engineers
 - i. Rabbit hole: Carnegie Mellon trying to get more people to do computer science: they changed the language way they talk about it: not about software, or hardware; changed it to: solving the world's problems; vision statements: making life better; that attracts women; idea: learn here to solve the world's problem; make communities richer; target recruitment of women faculty
 4. Question (Krista De Cooke): We do have the option to buy dental and vision insurance, but does not cover enough; I can still go to NY to use my mother's; is there any way to include dental and vision and make it more comprehensive?
 - a. Answer (Chancellor Plowman): Let's put that on the list with stipends; are the costs too high?
 5. Question (Shahram Hatefi Hesari): In the last meeting we had with you we talked about the fees we have to pay here; most students at other universities do not pay the same fees
 - a. Answer (Chancellor Plowman): we have not done anything on it; if we can do some evaluation and see what we can do
 6. Thanks for having me; keep up the great work!
 7. Comment (David Willis): when we first met with Chancellor Plowman she said: let's sit down in our office, not hers; when she says mattering and belonging, she means it; watch her speeches on Youtube, they are very inspiring

5. Committee Reports

- a. Treasurer, Amanda Lake Heath
 - i. Now have a check book; no expenses this time
 - ii. Comment (David Willis): we saved a good amount of money we can spend this semester; there are \$5,848.98 remaining in our budget
- b. Equity and Diversity, Derek Boyd
 - i. Have nothing; no updates
 - ii. Email gssedc@utk.edu for questions
 - iii. Question (Andrew Putt): IJs anyone from your group part of the search committee for the Vice Chancellor? Especially when we want to attract 300 more doctoral students, equity and diversity might be a thing
 1. Answer (Dean Thompson): the new committee is on top of diversity and engagement, and inclusion is on it; Nathalie Campbell is on the committee; students are represented; when we get people to campus we can get students to ask questions; diversity is an important issue for me and Derek Boyd; not just the bare minimum definition
- c. Travel Awards, Nicholas Sarafolean
 - i. Spring travel awards went so much better; everything is back to normal; we figured when we switched over to electronic signatures the first semester would be rough; back to normal
 - ii. 262 applied for spring; \$229,000 were given out; 33 applications rejected because of minor reasons (awards under minimum award, or already received awards in fall); we might tweak it a little bit for the summer, but at the moment it seems to be working;
 - iii. What we are working on now: new ideas that the committee can work on next year; new software solutions
 - iv. Question (Elizabeth O'Connell): When are we rolling out for summer?
 1. Answer (Nicholas Sarafolean): February, but maybe January
 - v. Question (Jonathan Kubesch): Can we get an email announcement please?
 - vi. Comment (David Willis): give a round of applause: your leadership inspires me
- d. Professional Development Travel Awards, Kamille Piacquadio (done by a proxy)
 - i. A few updates: we gave out \$6000 so far; working on revising the FAQ page; making it easier (online classes) for example
 - ii. Question (Donnie Barnett): Is there a cutoff time for applications?
 1. Answer (Sue Choi): money runs out after May 1st; but we do ask that people submit applications two weeks before the travel; running application
 - iii. Question (Ava Hedayatipour): In the future will both applications be the same (all digital)? Right now, PDTA wants hard copies
 1. Answer (David Willis): we wanted to look into software options before we switch over
- e. Programming and Events, Ben Coulter
 - i. Working with executive committee to have great events

- ii. Hops and Holler; Schulz Bräu, and Alliance Brewing: "GSS Senator Plus One"-social event; come and bring one fellow student from your department that may have an interest in becoming a senator next year; details will come out next week
- iii. "Thanksgiving Dinner Event": later this semester; place for discourse and discussion and how to relate to people outside of academia; candidates running for office next year will have a change to talk too; replaces Townhall
- iv. GPSAW: full schedule in the coming month
- v. Question (Chloe Sandoval): What happened to the hockey game: student social vs. senator social?
 - 1. Answer (David Willis): We looked at options: comparing hockey game with "GSS Senator Plus One"; less value for the money for the hockey game; better use the money for other things; spending money on things that are open to all students: either one hockey game, or several senator socials and/or GPSAW events for everybody
- f. Mental Health Ad Hoc Committee, Chloe Sandoval
 - i. Planning to meet with the Counselling Center director; at the roundtable; seemed interested in what students had to say
 - ii. Meeting with the Student Success Center; when you are stressed Graduate Student Services might be helpful; prevents people from having stress; will talk to David Willis about the Vice Chancellor
 - iii. Got several stories and qualitative data from various graduate students; will craft an email you can send out to your departments; we are still working on a better and legal way to collect quantitative data; we can access some data from the Counselling Center, but not much; we would like to meet with the Chancellor
 - 1. Comment (Dean Thompson): I would like to meet with you first
- g. Annual Fundraiser, Jonathan Kubesch (Interim Chair)
 - i. Big thanks to the committee; come in with a loose objective trying to figure out; we retired the fun-run
 - ii. Most immediate delivery: t-shirts for fundraising; ready for the "Thanksgiving Dinner"; if you want to help out, or know a cheap printer, etc., let us know; if there is anything else, let me know as well
 - iii. Comment (Darcy Ayers): Borderland Tees in South Knoxville has cheap prices
 - iv. Question (Amanda Lake Heath): Is this annual fundraiser still going towards Smokey's Pantry
 - 1. Answer (Jonathan Kubesch): that is the current objective until informed otherwise
 - 2. Comment (Amanda Lake Heath): Is that still set in stone?
 - a. Answer (David Willis): if anyone knows a cause let us know
- h. Legislative Steering, Austin Boyd
 - i. Proposing three amendments
 - 1. Voting on that next meeting

- ii. Article 5: this is to fix the actual rules that are listed
- iii. This one is an addition for a technicality for losing a quorum; we do not keep log of who is here; just one time; we do not want to lose quorum; this more reflects the Faculty Senate
- iv. Comment (David Willis): on the first two they seem pretty understandable; third part is something we need to talk about/discuss next time; abstaining can be a democratic thing; want to hear good things during an argument
- v. Comment (Chloe Sandoval): I noticed we are no longer doing abstentions, but only aye and nay; can we go back to having abstentions?
 - 1. Answer (Austin Boyd): this is a major thing; we need to do that with Robert's Rules; we did not do that because we are rushing through things; if people leave and do not say how they wanted to vote we cannot assume they would vote yay; we are not voting
- vi. Question (Elizabeth O'Connell): Can we look at a percentage of the quorum so that we would lose quorum if we had less?
 - 1. Answer (Austin Boyd): this is saying that; checking quorum numbers at the start of the meeting; this sentence would say that once the person running the sign in process sees a quorum we will not lose it; so we can always vote whenever there are people leave
 - 2. Comment (Elizabeth O'Connell): when we get under 50% we are not representing anymore
 - 3. Question (Jonathan Kubesch): What are the numbers for a quorum? Have we ever gone under a quorum? Have we ever gone under 75 percent or so?
 - a. Answer (David Willis): that is a response - worst case scenario - for whole departments not showing up because they are at conferences
- vii. Question (Andrew Putt): Can we do an online survey where you report when you left?
 - 1. Question (David Willis): Would you do it?
 - 2. Answer (Andrew Putt): Yes, absolutely
 - 3. Comment (Austin Boyd): We need to make sure that we do not run into issues like that, but we will talk about that in the future
- viii. February we will not have a speaker; Executive Committee made the decision that we need time to talk about things
- ix. Austin Boyd reads out what is on the constitution slide; we have not
 - 1. A regular meeting following the... - bylaws state one meeting instead of two; following the first one I have presented it today; we will strike that from the bylaws and confirm it with the constitution; they say something different and constitution supersedes
- x. Question (Jonathan Kubesch): Do we vote on that separately or as a whole package?

- a. Answer (Austin Boyd): We will vote on them separately; we could put the first two together since they are only procedural
 - i. Nominations: SGA Liaison, David Willis
 - i. We need someone to help us out and run social media accounts; not just GSS, but also Graduate School; so if you are good and want something on your resume, just let me know
 - 1. Suzanne Sawusch volunteers
 - 2. Comment (Dean Thompson): it is important to coordinate with Dr. Hendricks
 - ii. SGA President: Natalie Campbell
 - 1. Very happy to be hearing with you; we had a meeting with David Willis to figure out how SGA and GSS can work together; GSS was a part, we still want to work cohesively; one area we need your help is the travel fund; SGA initiative from 2018; we wanted to have a more broad student organization travel fund; in the past we had a fund to support programming for student organizations; we keep getting requests from student organizations for travel money; up and running for three semesters; committee is chaired by myself with two student appointments and a standing position who works professionally; we received a lot of applications from graduate organization; we need a representative from the graduate students; we meet bi-weekly; a fun group;
 - 2. Question (Elizabeth O'Connell): Any idea on what the time would be?
 - a. She would volunteer to do that
 - 3. Comment (David Willis): I would task you to better communicate with SGA; bring back SGA stuff
6. New Business
 - a. Website
 - i. If you look at the main page of the GSS there is a new site for senators; working on that; when you want to have a page I need your headshot picture; we took pictures, but I cannot recognize all of you
 - ii. Our email is gsspress@utk.edu; if you send hesary@vols.utk.edu a biography and headshot then I will make your webpage; so far I have made 1/3rd of you; then you will be your webpage
 - iii. Question (Sue Choi): Do you want to talk about archiving it?
 - 1. Answer (Shahram Hatefi Hesari): right now, when you look at it you are associated with a year; so you will be forever part of GSS; with the biography you can also send me more stuff; I will send you the format once you send me your picture
 - 2. Comment (David Willis): there are so many things we talked about tonight, we will send out a newsletter with all the information
 - iv. Question (Suzanne Sawusch): D you want us to send our own headshot?

1. Answer (Shahram Hatefi Hesari): Yes, I need them to compare them to the new pictures we took
 - v. Question (Jonathan Kubesch): Can we link this back to our department webpage?
 1. Answer (Shahram Hatefi Hesari): If you have the department webpage I can link you back
 - vi. Some of you are committee chairs; we have another section for you; please: in the email you send me, write down if you are a committee chair so we can do that
 - vii. Question (Derek Boyd): Can you give us your email one more time?
 1. Answer (Shahram Hatefi Hesari): hesary@vols.utk.edu
- b. Elections
- i. Coming soon
 - ii. We need you all to run for office; David Willis and I (Sue Choi) learned so much; if we had someone who already was a senator that might help GSS out a lot; officer positions; committee chairs; tell your departments about it
 - iii. Question (Jonathan Kubesch): Have you considered making a frequently asked questions list to prepare incoming officers?
 - iv. Question (Chloe Sandoval): How much of a time commitment is that?
 1. Answer (Sue Choi): 30 hours for Vice President a month; it is a time commitment
 - v. Question (unidentified): How do we formally apply?
 1. Answer (Simon Rotzer): You will email your application for candidacy to the secretary; there will be an email about that
- c. GPSAW
- i. First meeting on the 17th of January; we will have a lot more news after that; Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week; BBQ in the Park; baseball game; lots of events coming up
 - ii. Question (Dené Vann): Is this going to be on the main campus or the ag-campus?
 1. Answer (Dean Thompson): it will be spread around
- d. Dean Thompson
- i. Professional development is something we will focus on this year; I will send notice to David Willis to share with you a couple of flyers:
 1. "Strategic Planning for your Life": January; February; March: how to make strategic decision to move yourself forward
 2. "What's your work about": session on abstract presentation; oral presentation; another thing
 3. Both flyers you will be getting; but you can also go to the graduate student website to see them
- e. New Business:
- i. Ideas/Suggestions (Surendra Singh and Jonathan Kubesch):
 1. Discussion about using professional development funds for society memberships
 - a. We as students have to cover them; could we maybe set up a fund to apply to those memberships?

2. Walking bridge between ag-campus and Publix; we appreciate the ag-express
 - a. Comment (Surendra Singh): adding to the bridge point: right now the ag-campus and Publix are really close, but for walking it is a lot; not a lot of people have cars available; we only have one café; it would be really nice to diversify the lunch options for the campus
 - i. Comment (Dean Thompson): I will take that forward; I do not know who owns the land, but I will take it to the responsible committee
 - b. Comment (David Willis): For the first option: we will dig a little bit and see what we can do
 - i. Comment (Jonathan Kubesch): we understand that we might not be able to get all the money, but maybe a rolling list for departments
 - ii. Announcement (Derek Boyd): if anyone is interested: the 4th Annual Disaster and Human Rights Management Conference is coming up; we are looking for interdisciplinary work and contacts
 - iii. Announcement (Dean Thompson): be on the outlook for a lot of opportunities that will happen here the next months: look for them and share with each other
7. Adjournment, at 7:25PM
 - a. Motion to adjourn (Jonathan Kubesch); second (Katharine Ryan); all in favor; meeting adjourned

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 5th, 2020 at 6:00 pm in SU169