

I hope this message finds you well! My name is Hunter Hammock and I am a graduate student in the Department of Plant Sciences. I am very interested in running for GSS President for the upcoming year and would like to be considered for the upcoming election.

I have really enjoyed my time as the PS Senator this previous year and I want to get further involved with GSS. I think that GSS has the ability to make a huge impact on the experiences of graduate students. I hope to use the knowledge and connections I've gained during my time at UT to further graduate students' interests and give them the best experience possible during their time on Rocky Top.

To say I bleed orange is an understatement -- I started my UG here in 2010, graduated with my MS in 2018, and expect to graduate with my Ph.D. in May 2022. I love the University of Tennessee and during my final year on campus, I want to give back to the place that made me who I am today.

I have extensive leadership and public speaking experience through my involvement with NSLS UTK, FYS, CLS, and being a TA for graduate-level courses. I am a passionate and driven person that has a strong desire to make lasting change and lifelong connections.

As President, one of my primary goals would be advancing the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of our graduate student body. How can we improve each graduate student's experience at UTK? Improving a student's overall well-being will directly impact morale and productivity. Pursuing an advanced degree is a difficult endeavor, and the Grad School has done an excellent job at providing a wealth of resources to assist its students. How can we better utilize these resources and make them more available to students?

Next, I would like to facilitate the reconnection of the graduate student body now that COVID restrictions are letting up and more students are getting vaccinated. Both as a senator and graduate student, I know firsthand the limitations we faced and how social isolation is disruptive to productivity. Graduate students have craved social interaction and want to network with other professionals inside/outside their fields. GSS is provided with an excellent opportunity now that UTK plans to host full in-person classes in the fall semester, and I want to take full advantage of that.

Lastly, identify the current needs of the graduate student body. Are they the same as the last ten years or have they dramatically changed? How are the current needs of grad students being addressed and what can we do to fix them? Many unprecedented challenges arose during the past year and many more will continue to present themselves as we start the reopening process. I would like to implement brief surveys and listening sessions to identify key issues that can be distributed to committees for evaluation and strategic planning. This will determine the priority of initiatives pursued throughout the next academic year.

I would love the opportunity to advocate for the graduate student body and help improve the overall experience for each student. UT has given me so much, both personally and professionally -- I feel an obligation to do everything in my ability to give back and improve the lives of those around me.