



### **GSS Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, April 21, 2022 **5:30 pm**

Student Union, Room 169

Senators Present: Refer to Appendix

Ex-Officio Members Present: Millie Turner Cheatham, Dixie Thompson, Nick Jakel

#### **Opening Remarks - George Fields**

1. Call to Order - George
  - a. Hello everyone and welcome to our eighth and final formal senate session of the 2021-2022 academic year!
    - i. Thank you for being here today. We have a lot of updates on the agenda for today.
    - ii. We want to thank our continuing senators for their service as well as our new senators.
  - b. I want to briefly walk through our senate procedures because we have many new senators with us this time.
    - i. We will remain in accordance with Robert's Rules or order throughout the session.
    - ii. Please raise your hand if you wish to be acknowledged. For those on zoom, please raise your hand and one of the moderators will notify me so I can acknowledge you. Once you have the floor, you may speak. Always introduce yourself with your name and voting number so that we can make note in the meeting minutes.
    - iii. Chat will be muted through the senate meeting so that we adhere to robert's rules/parliamentary procedures. If you have technical

issues, please email [gss@utk.edu](mailto:gss@utk.edu) AND [gss2@utk.edu](mailto:gss2@utk.edu) and we will help.

## 2. Attendance

- a. We will use QR codes provided during each session. Links will be provided to zoom senators.
- b. Please mark yourself as absent so we can proceed with a quorum.
- c. Attendance taken.
- d. We do have a quorum, even if you haven't logged in yet, please do so so that we have a record.
- e. Thank everyone for participating.
- f. Now help me give a warm welcome to our GSS President Hunter Hammock, with the President's report.

## **President's Report - Hunter Hammock**

1. Hello and welcome to our final formal session of this academic year!
  - a. Mohamed and I are truly appreciative of your service, your leadership, and the voices you've been able to provide for our students.
  - b. It is only together with everyone's contributions that we have been able to accomplish so many things.
  - c. I'm glad to know that we are leaving an impressive legacy for this year, and I know that momentum will only continue into next year's leadership.
  - d. It's a duty and a privilege to build on the leadership legacy left before us, and to pass knowledge and skills on to the leaders that come after us
  - e. We stand on the shoulders of giants.
  - f. For our final formal session, encourage you to improve and inspire.
  - g. The fundamental purpose of grad school is to learn, teach, create, and research to further ourselves and society as a whole. As senators, you lead your department and academic units in that effort.
2. GSS General Election
  - a. We greatly appreciate the turnout and support.
  - b. As you know, George Fields and Leighton Chappell were elected as our President and Vice President for the 2022-23 academic year.
  - c. I want to officially congratulate them on the victory. I know that everyone worked hard on their respective campaigns this year, and we had four extremely qualified candidates.
  - d. Today we will be doing a ceremonial transfer of power, and Mohamed will speak more on that in a bit.
3. Senate Seat Establishment
  - a. Establishment of senate seats based on enrollment will occur prior to the transition and all units will be notified of any senate seat changes.

- b. I predict there will be a few changes as well as a handful of seats added to the total.
  - c. Should not impact many departments but there will be some changes, so please stay in contact. These changes will be published to our senator roster list as well as the units lacking representation in an attempt to fill the vacant seat. We want to make sure everyone is represented. Once this is confirmed you will hear more.
4. Reflections and praise
- a. I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as president and be an advocate for students, I've learned so much about leadership and been able to meet and network with great people
  - b. I've mentored and been mentored and learned from both
  - c. This has been an amazing experience
  - d. I'd like to thank Dean Thompson, for her vital role and for serving as a mentor for Mohamed and I. She has shown her passion and dedication for graduate students and I have learned so much from our interactions. The graduate students are honored to have her on our side.
  - e. Ms. Millie has been such a crucial part of GSS and we are so blessed to have her. She has worked tirelessly to help us succeed and we could not have accomplished a tenth of what we have without her support. Thank you so much.
  - f. Mohamed, I have truly enjoyed working with you this past year. I had not known him prior to the election last year, but we immediately started off with a great working relationship. He has been diligent and has been a huge advocate for the issues we've faced this year. So thankful that he's been by my side this year, and I directly and indirectly attribute many of our successes to him. Thank you so much Mohamed.
  - g. And to each our executive board and committee chairs, I have valued each and every one of our relationships and am so amazed but what we have accomplished together.
  - h. The committee chairs have gone above and beyond and that has not gone unnoticed (including Kat's work helping to condense my long winded remarks into something a little more reasonable).
  - i. Thank you to all external committee representatives as well.
  - j. And thank you to all senators for your countless hours.
5. Lets quantify the work done
- a.  $80 \text{ senators} \times \text{average of } 6 \text{ hours per month} \times 10 \text{ months} =$
  - b. 4800 hours that GSS has directly contributed to the campus.

- c. And that's assuming only the base duties and responsibilities of each senator (most of us do even more)
  - d. As of last year, \$24.54 was the hourly rate for volunteer service in Tennessee
    - i. It really pays to be a volunteer
  - e. Now if we multiply 24.54 x 4800, that roughly equates to almost 120k of work contributed to UTK from this body
  - f. A major accomplishment for the year and I think that truly embraces our volunteer spirit.
6. GSS 2021-2022 accomplishments
- a. Many are seen, many are unseen.
  - b. Mohamed and I have spent countless hours with the chancellor, provost, VCs and deans to further our interests on campus.
  - c. In addition to many other committees and action groups on campus.
  - d. Lobbying for stipends, decreases in fees, and the other issues you have brought forth throughout the year. We have heard you and we are advocating for you!
  - e. Just to name a few accomplishments.
    - i. Improving grad student well-being (mental, physical, social, emotional, financial).
    - ii. Lobbying (both behind the scenes and publicly) for increased stipends to fix standard of living issues that are getting substantially worse as the economic crisis continues.
    - iii. Social reconnection through sponsored events.
    - iv. Reduce barriers for minority, international, and non-tennessee students.
    - v. Overhaul of constitution and bylaws.
    - vi. Consistently advocating for our student body.
    - vii. As well as highlighting the accomplishments of our students.
    - viii. GSS support and notoriety on campus.
    - ix. The procurement and distribution of travel and academic support awards, totaling 350k.
7. I would like to formally propose special 9th session on May 10th at 5:30pm
- a. While we have done a significant amount this year, we still have a number of resolutions that are on the cusp completion.
  - b. I would like to formally propose a 9th, short, special senate session, for May 10th at 5:30pm, which is the last day of classes.
  - c. We plan to be in the room as usual, but we encourage zoom attendance due to it being the last day of the semester and brevity of the meeting.

- d. This session would be 30 minutes or less, and the only agenda items would be voting on pre-distributed resolutions.
  - e. Justifications for holding this session.
    - i. Everyone has put in significant work and we have a lot of momentum.
    - ii. I want to get as many of the items on the admin's agenda for next year, regardless of whether we pass them, or just acknowledge they have been in the works, for the record, and stage development/implementation from now until August.
    - iii. I want to emphasize the importance of doing this right and make sure each resolution has the best chance of success.
    - iv. One phrase or sentence could derail the resolution and nullify the work we have dedicated.
    - v. We want to serve the students to the best of our ability, do not want to ruin the relationships, reputation, and diplomacy that we have built this past year and many years before.
    - vi. Perfect opportunity to end the year on a very strong note and set priorities for GSS and garner support from SGA/faculty senate.
  - f. My main goal is to set up the next year, George and Leighton, for success.
  - g. If everyone in person and on zoom could quickly check their calendars, on May 10 at 530, and raise their hand if they would be available for a 15-30 minute zoom session on May 10 at 530.
  - h. For the record, visual count looked like we will be able to have quorum.
  - i. We will move forward with that and I will send you the calendar invite as usual with agenda and supporting documents.
  - j. Thank you all for being willing to meet another time, it is truly appreciated.
8. Based on our experience this year, we believe some of the issues that will impact students the most include:
- a. Financial situations and stipend increases.
  - b. Standard of living issues for grad students.
  - c. Food insecurity, housing insecurity.
  - d. Improving gss name recognition on campus.
  - e. Develop a communication strategy to reach all students, with multiple channels including social media, website, Tennessee Today, etc.
  - f. For George and Leighton to be the face of GSS and promote us to the school.
  - g. George and Leighton have their work cut out for them, but I know they will lead this organization well.

9. Looking back on our goals set for the past year, I believe we have been able to accomplish our campaign pledges and pushed the needle so much farther than we had initially thought was possible.
10. In addition to all of that, this year we were able to secure an extremely talented and capable coordinator with a passion and drive for helping students. His support will exponentially benefit GSS.
  - a. Not sure how we made it for the last 11 months!! -- honestly I know exactly how, the dedication of Ms. Millie and Dean Thompson, and the rest of the grad school staff. So a huge thank you to them.
11. Closing Remarks
  - a. I am very happy to report that gss is in excellent standing and I am confident that our momentum will carry into the next year.
  - b. Academic support awards
    - i. Travel awards are exhausted and deadline has passed, but academic support still has money.
    - ii. Please push that for your departments.
  - c. Assist with transitions and keep us updated.
    - i. We will assist with the process if needed.
  - d. Please stay in touch and involved over summer, we can get a lot of work done.
  - e. There will be some potential exec team and committee chair positions available over the next few months. Reach out if you have interest in getting further involved. Want to encourage students to stay engaged over the summer.
  - f. Proud of George and Leighton, and their ability to campaign and garner the support of their peers.
    - i. Along with all of the exec team and committee chairs, they have been vital to our success this year. I know that GSS will be in great hands next year. I know they will be able to leave a legacy that will make us all proud.
12. I'd like to leave you with some thoughts on the legacy we build and leave, from one of the most successful investors in history, Warren Buffett
  - a. "Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."
  - b. I am honored to leave something behind that will continue to grow and flourish, spreading deep roots, propagating skills, and cultivating expertise for generations to come.
  - c. I am proud of the trees we have planted this year in GSS, and the shade it will one day provide for the next generation of graduate students.
  - d. I can't wait to visit campus one day as Dr. Hammock, and sit in the shade.

- e. Thank you, and go vols.

### **Vice President's Report - Mohamed Al Sager**

1. Hello Everyone, thank you for joining us today.
2. And welcome to our 8th senate meeting of this year.
3. I have a few announcements I'd like to share with you.
  - a. I would like to encourage you to Take the VOL Voices Survey.
    - i. The Office of Title IX's Vol Voices survey is gauging campus experiences and perceptions related to sexual misconduct. The survey is completely anonymous and confidential. Results will help inform positive change in our community on campus.
    - ii. And you can Be Entered to Win- Vol gift cards.
  - b. Academic support fund is open, and we want to make a strong push on that front. Please make other students aware of this opportunity. The academic support is on a first come first serve basis.
4. I would like to also praise the grad school and the search committee on securing our new coordinator. You all have had a chance to meet him at our last senate meeting and some of the GSS events.
  - a. He has embraced the position and has done great work in the few short weeks he has been with us. He will help our GSS leaders take this organization to the next level year to year. Thank you Nick for all of your hard work so far, it has not gone unnoticed.
5. Really proud of all the work that went into the awards ceremony and the 5k. We have gotten a lot of compliments from both and hopefully we can continue these types of events in the future.
  - a. Thank you to the committee chairs and senators, they were great events and you worked to hard
6. As a thank you to all of our senators for their service, we have purchased graduation cords. We will send out info with pick up times/locations for everyone's convenience.
7. We are in the process of planning a town hall meeting, where the current and future GSS administrations can field questions from senators, the grad and professional student body, and even the general public.
  - a. This will be hosted live in person (likely this room), and streamed over FB and zoom. We will send an email and advertisements once the details are finalized.
  - b. This will be a great opportunity to gather information about the current sentiment of our graduate and professional student body and help the new administration shape their plans.

- c. We hope that you are able to attend and encourage students in your departments to also attend.

#### 8. Transfer of Power

- a. Today, we will have the ceremonial transfer of power for our president elect and vp elect.
- b. The Pres and VP elect will officially take office on June 1st of this year and begin normal duties. When that happens, Hunter and I are relieved of duty, and will both continue to assist in any capacity needed throughout the summer.
- c. All executive team and committee chair positions will be relieved of duty in an official capacity.
  - i. The newly sworn-in president will have the capacity to immediately appoint interim positions at their discretion, pending confirmation.
  - ii. This may include a “transition” from previous academic year exec team/committee chairs if the president sees fit.
  - iii. The goal is to have a productive summer, develop a strong exec team, and also allow the opportunity for senators to get further involved with the organization.
- d. Please reach out if you have any interest in this capacity.
- e. The transition will occur over the next few months and we will keep you updated.

#### 9. Senator Transitions

- a. I would like to also comment on the senator transitions as we approach the end of the year.
- b. Please begin to make arrangements for your academic units.
- c. I would like to propose that we pursue a route to formalize a date (ideally June 1, in conjunction with P/VP transfer of power) and have that on the agenda next year.
  - i. Academic units will select representation but we will specify dates of terms of service.
  - ii. Units will adjust and adapt based on their historical context and current procedures.
  - iii. Can send in a new senator mid year if that is appropriate for their program. And appointed representatives can be “reappointed” starting June 1.
  - iv. If there needs to be a switch because of logistics that is okay.
  - v. Exceptions can be made. But it would be good to instill the expectation of June 1-May 31 for an academic year term of service.
  - vi. We have had a major issue with transitions considering practically every senator transitions on a different day of the year.



- vii. That and potentially some election updates, voting procedures, and a list of other ideas are being passed along to our new administration.
  - viii. We also encourage that senior senators participate in the advisory committee after your term has ended. Your experience and expertise will greatly benefit our organization, and we want to continue building our network of graduate Volunteers.
10. One major final announcement.
- a. I want to inform everyone that the constitution was successfully voted in with an overwhelming majority.
  - b. Congratulations to everyone who put in work on those documents.
  - c. These changes will serve GSS for many years to come.
11. As Hunter mentioned there are a few more objectives we hope to accomplish before the end of our term.
- a. With that said I would like to ask for your continued support and cooperation on passing these legislations
  - b. We have all contributed to these documents, and I want to make sure our work is brought to fruition
  - c. We truly appreciate you making the time for the final senate meeting to pass these pieces of legislation and approve minutes
12. Closing Remarks
- a. I would really like to thank all of the senators for all their hard work and their contributions.
  - b. Even with your busy schedules you took the time to help whether it was attending the internal meeting or working on a draft proposal or volunteering in events.
  - c. You've really made a difference.
  - d. We really appreciate all the contributions you have made for the graduate student body.
  - e. We would like to specifically recognize the exec team and committee chairs, they've done an extraordinary job. I have really enjoyed working with each of you and am thankful for the experience.
  - f. I am very thankful for the opportunity to have served in my role as Vice president.
  - g. I met a lot of great folks and learned a lot more.
  - h. And I made some friends along the way so for that I thank you.

## **Internal Committee Reports**

## 1. Davis Carter, Finance Committee Chair

- a. Current GSS Account Balance: \$2701, we've spent around \$4500 in March and April on the 5k and awards ceremony, purchasing graduation cords.
  - i. Plan to spend remaining budget
    1. GSS T-shirt
    2. Table Banner
    3. Potentially purchasing a GSS Tent - around \$800, branded with the GSS logo
    4. If you have ideas for what to do with the funds, please email me.
    5. Considering additional backdrop
- b. Checking Account Balance: \$504
  - i. \$320 deducted from previous balance for EMS at 5K
- c. 5K Report
  - i. Overview
    1. 77 People registered, a good number for our first year.
    2. 49 Runners attended 5K, which is a shockingly high number because of the bad weather, there was sleet that stopped right before the race started.
    3. \$2064 raised through donations and registrations
    4. \$1500 donation to BOP = 4500 meals going to the surrounding communities.
    5. Wouldn't be possible without the committee and volunteers
    6. Increasing our checking to \$1000.
    7. It's a good idea to make this an annual event, and make it even more successful in the future.
- d. The committee's main goals from beginning of the year.
  - i. Spend our budget.
  - ii. Create a culture of fundraising in GSS.
  - iii. Use fundraising as social events.
    1. We did that with the 5k and Halloween costume contest fundraiser.
    2. Thanks for supporting us and BOP.

## 2. Catherine Warner, Judiciary Committee

- a. We first met in October and began working on the Constitution and Bylaws
  - i. In November we met with the Exec Board and moved forward
  - ii. In February we had input from senators
  - iii. In March, we passed it here
  - iv. In April, it went to a vote to grad students and succeeded

- v. Commend all the senators for the pride and honor it took to get these things accomplished, and how it's impacted GSS as an organization
- b. Committee has been reviewing resolutions in development and no current conflicts found.
  - i. We will review each piece of potential legislation as they are finalized and report our findings to the group.
- c. In conjunction with the President and VP, we have been in discussion about the role of Justices and how the positions can be utilized to their full potential.
  - i. We would like to formally propose that next year we investigate the potential of expanding the Justices' roles to be a part of the commission of GSS general elections.
  - ii. They can help serve as an unbiased entity to administer the election in conjunction with the GSS coordinator. Explore integration into the constitution and increase transparency to the grad student body, with the intention of increasing notoriety of our grad student government and increasing participation of academic units.
- d. I also would suggest that we hold elections in tandem with SGA so we can market with them and students will know when "election week" is happening. It would create a great opportunity for collaboration.
- e. The past few months, Hunter has assisted in the establishment of an "SEC Coalition of Graduate Student Governments" to promote the collaborative voice of graduate and professional students across the southeast.
  - i. Great potential for networking, collaboration on policy, establishing working groups, and even annual conferences hosted at different schools each year (similar to what SGA has been doing for years).
  - ii. George will be installed in this group and we are looking forward to the development of the Coalition.
- f. Please bring any topics you'd like to discuss to us.
- g. Alexis Gilmore - 67: What fraction (percentage) of the grad student body participated in the election?
  - i. Nick Jakel - 4%, approximately 250 votes, an increase in total votes from past years

### **3. Igor Bernadi, Legislation Steering Committee Chair, Via Zoom**

- a. Resolutions in the works - making progress, was unable to put anything up for a vote currently, but may be coming in the future

- i. Apologies if there's issues with communicating the depths of our work
  - ii. We have to be careful with what we put forward
- b. Parking victory. Establishing procedures for how grad students can park on campus for research purposes.
  - i. Email sent to all of you, please forward to your constituents.
  - ii. I hope this gets posted on the GSS website somewhere for posterity.
  - iii. Advocate for yourselves using this policy to your departments
- c. Stipends: it is very difficult to get this done, often mentioning this to a dean or president results in them rolling their eyes.
- d. We were not able to achieve everything I wanted to this year.
- e. Hunter, Mohamed and I have been doing a lot of work behind the scenes to work.
- f. Already getting valuable criticism from students on the most recent email which held a draft.
- g. Will be available to provide information to the next committee chair, and laid groundwork to benefit us next year.
- h. Physics dept was proactive in increasing stipends before it got to the point that students had to bring legislation about it.
- i. Other proposals are in the works and those will go forward to the next Legislative Steering committee and next year's administration.
- j. Some success in our addressing mobility issues.
- k. As well as with office temperature issue.
- l. Working to allow for family and emergency leave, still hearing about administrators and deans who are not allowing for it - leading to students having to drop out of their program.
- m. Not just my team, but everyone has done hard work this year. Constitution and Bylaws change was crucial.
- n. Serves on technology fee advisory board.
- o. Thank you for your time.

#### **4. Lufuno Phophi, Equity and Diversity Committee Chair**

- a. What we've been working on:
  - i. Been really successful connecting with campus organization that support DEI - especially WiSTAR3. Well established relationship with student basic needs coalition organization, GSS helped hold an event.
  - ii. SBNC – great organization to work with.
  - iii. Want to work on gathering data about issues that affect grad students.

1. We need more, we are lacking in data.
2. Evaluating the work being done by individual departments as well to welcome and serve graduate students.
- iv. Housing resolution is being worked on right now, hoping to table until we transition to the new administration.
  1. Will be sending out a draft, please offer input.
  2. Might offer for vote if we can draft and circulate in time.
- v. International student support resolution.
  1. Drafting a resolution to address these issues.
  2. Want GSS to be on the forefront of welcoming and encouraging students from out of state or international.
- vi. Hope to address bus stops for students with mobility issues and increasing access in old buildings that may not be ADA compliant.
- vii. Want to encourage more diverse students and draw them to UTK.

**5. Brigid Ogden, Graduate Student Well-Being Committee Chair**

- a. Learning year, defining the role of the committee and where we can put our efforts.
- b. What we want to keep working on
  - i. HIV PReP Medication potential resolution
  - ii. Work on resource packet for students (new students), with plans to implement into website either this summer or this fall
    1. Information including insurance, registration, etc
  - iii. Surveys will be sent to senators before transition to determine the admin of GSS and issues going into next year, great chance to provide us with feedback and help draft the agenda for next year (especially since a lot of senators are transitioning in the next month or so, we want to gather your knowledge and experience).
  - iv. Primary purpose and focus of the committee moving forward is to gather data and information to assist with development of GSS legislation, as well as promote the general wellbeing (physical, mental, social, emotional, financial).

**6. Kassie Hollabaugh, Travel Awards Committee Chair**

- a. Complete overview of this year, amount awards
  - i. Over 300 students were awarded with a total of over \$135,000 being distributed. Average award of about \$440.
- b. Formula was established and metrics developed to determine values.
  - i. We expect the process will remain similar next year.
  - ii. My goal is to keep consistency from year to year.

- iii. We have made a number of strategic changes and the technological and policy level to streamline the process and make the awards as equitable as possible.
- iv. I am very happy with the progress and all of the funds we have given to our students this year.
- c. Still funding in academic support, please encourage people to apply
  - i. Can also get online conference registration paid for - including retrospectively.
- d. Our committee worked really hard to ensure as many students as possible were able to apply/receive a travel award.
  - i. We intend to develop a FAQ sheet that will detail the requirements, process, and FAQs we have received this year. Hopefully this will make the process even easier for next year having all the questions people tend to ask in one place.
  - ii. It really is critical for senators to forward the deadlines and updates to their constituents. This makes the process run smoother.

## **7. Leighton Chappell, Programming and Events Committee Chair**

- i. Awards ceremony was a success!
  1. We had roughly 120 attendees
  2. Handed out 52 awards
  3. The catering and set up was spot on - Thank you to the Graduate School
  4. Everyone had a great time, great pictures
  5. Thank you to everyone for all the support and help
  6. I truly hope to continue hosting the event and look forward to improving upon for next year.
- ii. Student Basic Needs Coalition Network Session with Dr. Duran was a success - really appreciate the support and it was great to collaborate with SBNC and several senators, hopefully we can do that in the future.
- iii. What events do you want to see next year?
  1. More frequent informal events for all students
    - a. Will go a long way to cementing our connection to the grad student body
    - b. Awards Reception
    - c. 5K
    - d. Maybe a 'welcome' event to start the year
    - e. Event for international and out of state students
    - f. An 'end of the semester event' for the fall semester

- g. Potentially a 'welcome back event' following Christmas break
- h. Lots of potential!

## **New Business**

### **1. General Election and Oath of Office - Hunter**

- a. I would like to make some brief comments about the general election before each of the elected officials will take their oaths.
- b. VoLink worked very well from a technical perspective, and was much more secure than the format last year.
  - i. Also easy to use and students are familiar with the system.
  - ii. Ability to limit criteria for eligible voters (i.e. actively enrolled grad and professional students).
  - iii. I would strongly recommend maintaining the VoLink platform for the general elections and google forms for general votes/attendance due their security and ease of use.
- c. Pres and VP will officially take power on June 1 to allow for the president elect and VP elect to effectively transition into their roles and hit the ground running.
- d. I am looking forward to passing the torch on June 1 and I know that George and Leighton will serve the senate well.
- e. Our turnout was low as a relative percentage of the graduate student body, but I am optimistic that we will be able to improve communication and connection with the student body, improving out engagement and participation.
- f. Low participation and engagement was a topic of our SEC colliation meeting, this is a major issue post covid, something the next year admin can work towards improving.
- g. That being said, we increased voting by 150% from last year.
- h. At this time, we will begin ask each of our elected officials of 2022-2023 to now take their oaths.

### **2. George swore oath of office, officiated by Hunter**

- a. George Fields, please raise your right hand and repeat after me.
- b. I, George Fields, solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the Presidency for the Graduate Student Senate.
- c. I will strive to further the goals and initiatives of this deliberative body.
- d. I will always act in the best interest of the graduate and professional students, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and enforce the constitution and bylaws of GSS of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

- e. Congratulations!
- f. I would like to now introduce George for brief remarks.

### **3. George remarks**

- a. Hello Everyone.
- b. I want to start off with giving thanks.
  - i. Thank you to everyone who participated in the election and encouraged others not in the Senate to be civically involved and to vote.
  - ii. Leighton and I are grateful to be elected to these positions and I know that we are looking forward to a year of hard work and dedication with the goal of making the lives of our fellow graduate students better.
  - iii. Thank you to GSS senators who have put in the work this year and make this organization what it is – an organization that supports graduate students in our efforts to be the best educators, researchers, and professionals that we strive to be and an organization that represents the interests, opinions, concerns, and even sometimes complaints to the administration, making our voices heard and impactful.
  - iv. Thank you to Hunter and Mohamed for leading this organization this past year. They were given leadership of the organization during an uncertain time, with information and realities surrounding the pandemic making the environment on campus different every day. They had grace and focus in leading then, and I am thankful now for their support as we transition into a new administration.
  - v. Thank you to Nick Jakel, the new GSS Program Coordinator, for taking some of the responsibility in managing this organization and running with it. Nick has been crucial up to this point in working with us on the awards banquet and administering the election. Looking forward, I look forward to working with Nick and seeing what we can accomplish together.
  - vi. I also want to thank Millie Cheatham and Dean Thompson for their support of our organization, providing much-needed feedback and always being willing to listen and help us move our goals forward.
  - vii. Last, I want to thank Leighton Chappell for his willingness to sign on to my vision for the GSS from the start, agreeing to run with me on our platform of guiding the GSS toward a new normal. I appreciate all of the effort you (Leighton) have already put into the new administration.
- c. When I first signed on with the GSS and expressed interest in the Senate Chair position, Hunter and Mohamed met with me to discuss their vision for the GSS and to confirm that I fit within that vision (thankfully I did). Their vision consisted of helping the graduate student body transition back



to campus during what was hoped to be the decline of COVID in the Fall. They also sought to bolster the socialization opportunities available to graduate students in an attempt to help relieve some of the mental and emotional pressure the pandemic placed on us.

- d. Leighton and I are taking this goal of supporting graduate students as they transition back to campus under a new normal one step further, equipping graduate students with the resources and support they need to thrive under the new normal now that we have largely transitioned back to campus.
- e. We ran on a multi-faceted platform that represents this effort.
  - i. Increased stipends
    1. This year, the administration has taken action to increase graduate student assistantship stipends to help relieve financial pressures many of us are facing.
    2. We will continue to work with the administration to seek a long-term plan for increasing stipends to keep pace with inflation and other economic factors.
  - ii. Lower dissertation fees
    1. Graduate students are required to enroll in thesis/dissertation hours (the total differs based on course of study).
    2. With the financial struggles we face, reducing the fees associated with this enrollment would significantly help graduate students afford attending Rocky Top and producing the best research and being the best teachers possible.
  - iii. Graduate meal options
    1. An internal GSS survey found that over 40% of respondents report issues surrounding food insecurity.
    2. We will push the administration to offer daily dining hall meals to graduate students, providing at least some peace of mind regarding food insecurity many of us face.
  - iv. GTA designated parking
    1. For too many years now, we have asked for graduate student parking in an all-or-nothing approach, leaving a significant demand that the administration refuses time and time again.
    2. We will work to compromise with the administration on this issue, seeking to gain staff parking for GTAs who serve essential functions of faculty, teaching courses and maintaining labs.
- f. Going forward, I want to call all of us to action.

- g. Leighton and I will be looking to formulate the interim executive team so that as soon as our June 1 effective date takes place, we are ready to get to work.
  - h. If you are interested in serving on the executive team, in one of the appointed positions and/or as a committee chair, please reach out to us.
  - i. I think we have a good footing and I look forward to jumping head first into making this a very productive year for GSS.
  - j. Again, thank you all, and GO VOLS!
- 4. Leighton swore oath of office, officiated by Mohamed**
- a. Leighton Chappell, please raise your right hand and repeat after me.
  - b. I, Leighton Chappell, solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the Presidency for the Graduate Student Senate.
  - c. I will strive to further the goals and initiatives of this deliberative body.
  - d. I will always act in the best interest of the graduate and professional students, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and enforce the constitution and bylaws of GSS of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
  - e. Congratulations!
  - f. I would like to now introduce Leighton for brief remarks.
- 5. Leighton remarks**
- a. Keep it short and simple.
  - b. Thanks everyone, this year has been such a blessing.
  - c. So glad I signed up to be Events chair.
  - d. Thanks to senators, my committee, it's been a joy.
  - e. George and I will get to work.
  - f. Hunter and Mohamed paved the way, they're pulling over to the side of the road, come June 1 - George and I are gonna hop in that hellcat and hit the road.

### **Adjournment - George**

- 1. Attendance
- 2. Quorum maintained
- 3. Final Special Session: Tuesday, May 10th, 2022 in SU 169 at 5:30
- 4. Adjournment

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*Minutes Recorded by Secretary Kat Capstick*

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, May 10th, 2022 in SU 169 at 5:30

## Appendix: Senator Attendance

### GSS Session 8

04.21.22

Department by College	Voting #	Name	Present
Architecture	1	Sarah Kenney	NO
Landscape Architecture	2	Mary Robbins	YES
Anthropology	3	Brigid Ogden	YES
Anthropology	4	Katherine Park	YES
Art	5	--	N/A
Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology	6	Bethany Campbell	NO
Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology	7	Logan Dunn	NO
Chemistry	8	Trevor Wilson	NO
Chemistry	9	Elizabeth O'Connell	NO
Earth and Planetary Sciences	10	Kaitlyn Gauvey	YES
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	11	Hope Ferguson	YES
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	12	Nate Gibson	YES
English	13	James Shepard	NO
English	14	Karen Norwood	YES
Geography	15	Victoria Haynes	YES
History	16	Jason Jonson	NO
Life Sciences	17	--	N/A
Mathematics	18	Evan Habbershaw	YES
Mathematics	19	--	N/A

Microbiology	20	Diana Ramierz	YES
Microbiology	21	--	N/A
Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures	22	Sara Rico-Godoy	YES
Music	23	Tracy Clark	NO
Music	24	--	N/A
Philosophy	25	Anne Merrill	YES
Physics and Astronomy	26	Igor Bernardi	YES
Physics and Astronomy	27	Ben Thornberry	YES
Political Science	28	George Fields	YES
Political Science	29	Caitlin Goff	YES
Psychology	30	Jane Kim	YES
Psychology	31	Rebecca Skadberg	YES
Sociology	32	Rossana Diaz	NO
Theatre	33	Rachel Darden	NO
Advertising & Public Relations	34	Dusty Bryan	YES
Communication and Information	35	--	N/A
Information Sciences	36	Jessica Barfield	YES
Information Sciences	37	Kat Capstick	YES
Journalism & Electronic Media	38	--	N/A
Child and Family Studies	39	Cassie Sorrells	NO
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies	40	Jeana Partin	NO
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies	41	Zac Hyder	YES
Educational Psychology and Counseling	42	--	N/A
Educational Psychology and Counseling	43	--	N/A

Kinesiology, Recreation, & Sport Studies	44	BJ Armstead	NO
Kinesiology, Recreation, & Sport Studies	45	Leighton Chappell	YES
Nutrition	46	Anna Jackson	NO
Public Health	47	Catherine Warner	NO
Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management	48	Youngdeok Lee	NO
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education	49	Arianna Banack	YES
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education	50	Jared Huisingh	NO
Accounting and Information Management	51	Jack Badger	YES
Accounting and Information Management	52	Alex Zukowski	YES
Business Administration	53	Joseph Moulden	YES
Business Administration	54	Abigail Ritch	NO
Business Analytics and Statistics	55	--	N/A
Economics	56	Richard Beem	NO
Finance	57	--	N/A
Management & Entrepreneurship	58	--	N/A
Marketing	59	Melissa Baucum	YES
Marketing	60	--	N/A
Supply Chain Management	61	Thu Trang Hoang	NO
Supply Chain Management	62	--	N/A
Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communications	63	Kendall Martin	NO
Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communications	64	--	N/A
Agricultural & Resource Economics	65	Mary Marks	NO
Animal Science	66	Alison Pfau	YES

Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science	67	Alexis Gillmore	YES
Entomology & Plant Pathology	68	Kassie Hollabaugh	YES
Food Science	69	Melissa Dein	NO
Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries	70	Davis Carter	YES
Plant Sciences	71	Devon Carrol	YES
Cent/Interdisc Rsrch Grad Edu (Bredesen Center)	72	Adedasola Ademola	YES
Cent/Interdisc Rsrch Grad Edu (Bredesen Center)	73	Isis Fukai	YES
Law	74	Jake Gray	NO
Law	75	Ronald Young	NO
Nursing	76	Elliot Loughran	NO
Nursing	77	Courtland Kuntz	NO
Social Work	78	Aritra Moulick	YES
Social Work	79	Dorothy Wallis	YES
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering	80	--	N/A
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering	81	Austin Conte	YES
Civil & Environmental Engineering	82	Mohammad Safaritaherkhani	NO
Civil & Environmental Engineering	83	Nastaran Moradloo	NO
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science	84	Manu Rathore	NO
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science	85	Samaneh Morovati	YES
Industrial & Systems Engineering	86	Ebrahim Sharifnia	YES
Industrial & Systems Engineering	87	--	N/A
Materials Science & Engineering	88	Zane Smith	YES
Materials Science & Engineering	89	Max Neveau	YES

Mechanical, Aerospace & Biomedical Engineering	90	--	N/A
Mechanical, Aerospace & Biomedical Engineering	91	--	N/A
Nuclear Engineering	92	Christian Young	YES
Nuclear Engineering	93	Evan Williams	NO
Comparative and Experimental Medicine	94	Ana Towe	NO
Comparative and Experimental Medicine	95	Lufuno Phophi	YES