



GSS Session 5 Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 25, 2023, 5:30 pm

Student Union, Room 169

Senators Present: Refer to Appendix

Guests Present: Blake Weiss, Program Director for Basic Needs, Dean of Students Office

1. **Call to Order 5:33**
2. **Attendance**
3. **Review of Agenda**
4. **Public Comment**

Members of the public may address GSS members on any item appearing on this posted agenda or matters impacting students.

5. Scheduled Guest Speakers

- a. Blake Weiss, Program Director for Basic Needs, Dean of Students Office
 - **Big Orange Pantry** – relocated to 3rd floor of Student Union (no longer in Greve Hall)
Hours are M-F 12:00pm to 5:30pm
 - On Monday the **Vol Update email** will include a link to a **Student Basic Needs Survey** by the Hope Foundation; this is a service paid for (through fees?) and helps the university better serve the student population and help the Basic Needs advocate for support, resources, and structural changes.
 - Hoping to have drop off/deliver services for the ag-campus in the near future

6. Reports

- a. President's Report: George T. Fields, GSS President
 - Organizational Updates
 - **Stipends**
 - In our conversations with university administrators, the issue of stipends is as complex a topic as imagined. Though the situation has been exacerbated with recent spikes in inflation and costs of living, the response from the university (though filled with sympathy and understanding) has remained the same: that the situation is too complex to resolve through university-wide solutions. Instead, stipends and graduate compensation overall have been left to the academic colleges and departments, which are given the discretion to determine

what we will be paid and how vast the inequality between graduate stipends are based on the terms of our employment contracts. The university has set minimums for what graduate assistants can be paid, and those minimums are set based on the terms of our contract: our duties and the duration of our contract.

- Looking forward, we need to explore creative ways to get academic colleges and departments to consider raising our stipends more than they have to match the increased costs of being graduate students on Rocky Top.

- **Healthcare**

- Many of you submitted questions prior to representatives from the Student Health Center visiting the Senate during the November Session.
- Following that Session, we communicated with them and received formulated responses addressing the submitted questions. **Those were shared in my email earlier this week.**
- If you have concerns, start there, and of course communicate with me any lingering questions or concerns you have, as Leighton and I are meeting with those administrators in the coming weeks to discuss making healthcare through the Student Health Center more accessible for graduate students.

- **OIT and Software**

- At the September Session, Senators submitted questions about the process by which students can request that the university acquire software licenses to assist with research.
- Their response was also shared this week, and I want to highlight that Dr. Reeves, Chief Information Officer for the university, stated that the two graduate seats on the UT Tech Fee Advisory Board are among the best ways for graduate students to influence these types of processes.
- To that end, those positions have been on the list of external committees we have been promoting since September.
- If you are interested in learning more about how the university processes requests for technology, including software, please consider volunteering to fill the positions we have on that board. I'll touch on more of that later during my update of vacant committee positions.

- **Parking**

- As you all may have seen on our Slack channel earlier this afternoon, parking scenarios on campus are worsening as our sports teams excel and campus becomes overall busier as a major part of the Knoxville community.
- One of the main issues with parking we have identified is the lack of communication with university personnel about best practices regarding parking.
- In an attempt to remedy this, we have maintained regular communication and collaboration with Parking and Transit.
- In that light, we will forward any communications we receive regarding parking interruptions on campus, evolving parking situations, and efforts to relieve the pressure on parking demand on campus.
- We are also working with senior administrators in a plan to evaluate and identify underutilized lots on campus in a larger effort to examine the overall parking situation on campus within the contexts of accommodating faculty, students, and staff.

- **Printing**

- Some of you also questioned printing on campus, including how the university might be able to support students whose departments either don't provide or limit printing associated with our duties.
 - Though we are waiting on an official response, information we have gathered points to the expectation that students can rely on their department to provide what's needed.
 - Concerns about that expectation need to be shared so we can look into specific situations.
- New News
 - **Elections**
 - Though it is still almost two months away, as an organization we need to begin the conversation about the election of the next President and Vice President of the Senate. If you or someone you know is interested in running for one of these elections, please feel welcome to reach out to Leighton, Nick, or myself for more information and insights into those positions.
 - More information about the election will be shared in the coming weeks.
 - On the topic of elections, it is time for us to take stock as an organization and begin thinking about how Senators in your academic unit are selected.
 - We will be sharing a survey to all of you in the coming weeks to gather information on how your academic units handle the selection of Senators. It is important to remember as we move forward that Senators are representatives of graduate students, and thus graduate students should play a role in selecting their representation on the Senate.
 - Keep an eye out for that survey and communicate with us if you have any questions.
 - **Resolutions**
 - The GSS is actively pursuing a couple of resolutions aimed at improving the graduate student experience. We are also exploring, based on the interests and concerns some Senators have expressed:
 - resolutions addressing the space issue on campus,
 - addressing stipend inequality on campus (touching back to my points earlier),
 - and addressing construction plans on campus.
 - The Legislative Steering Committee has also stated that they will be publishing a resolution guide for Senators, which provides guidelines for how Senate resolutions should be constructed and presented.
 - Hannah Thompson, the Chair of Legislative Steering, has expressed that the committee is poised to assist Senators with topics of interest and exploring whether interests are fitted for a resolution.
 - Use the committee as a resource if you wish to pursue a resolution.
 - **Chancellor's Email Regarding Business Building Construction**
 - If you haven't seen it, the Chancellor released an announcement to the campus specifying the updated plan for the construction of the new business building and the related demolition of Greve, Henson, and Dunford Halls.
 - Concerns we have heard from Senators at previous Sessions include those surrounding where academic and administrative units in those halls will be moved, and how their relocation will impact their engagement with the larger campus community.
 - Based on her communication, it seems that the university has arranged for some of those units to move into Stokely Management Tower.

- Remaining questions I have include exactly which units will move into the Tower, and how moving into the Tower affects issues of access to office space for the faculty, staff, and students in those units.
 - We are actively seeking more information from the administration and will report back.
- **GSS Office Move**
 - A piece of good news for the organization - we are moving the GSS office to a space that is more accessible to students and better accommodates the needs of the organization.
 - **We will be moving to the CSE suite of the Student Union**, in the area behind Steak and Shake.
 - As we finalize this move, please feel free to stop by and see the new space. Being in this office will enable us to better network with organizations and administrators on campus, and will facilitate collaboration with the SGA, which is also located in that CSE suite.

Question from Senator 99: Any updates from the Chancellor's Town Hall Meeting?

Answer: Office of Ombud Services – Duren Thompson –

Speaking about what happened in the Town Hall meeting on the Campus Master Plan

Three things were that their immediate priorities were to address space issues in Chemistry, improvement issues in Arts & Sciences/Humanities, and Graduate Student Housing (there is currently no graduate student housing, but Chancellor stated that that needs to change). Also there has been a call from the student population to make campus more walkable and bikeable which would require construction of roads and bike paths on campus which will also impact parking.

Question from Senator ?: Regarding this stipend issue? I know. Spent a lot of time and thanks for that. But I noticed the website you shared it. It was 2021 which was way before this inflation.

Answer from George: I spent some time looking through the resources that they had published, and there is nothing for 2022, which is exactly what we're going to be seeking -- and well, really, it'll be 2,023 right? My goal is to use the very real problems that we have with inflation and cost of living housing demand, which, as you touched on, I'll touch on in a minute, because I'm going to talk briefly about the housing report.

Question from Senator 77: Is there a way to make it so there is no minimum/maximum and that all grad students receive an equal stipend?

Answer from George: Yeah, that's a valuable piece of input. I know that the University, for staff positions, they do provide in their market ranges which are published online. They do provide a range, and that seems to be the model. But we can explore, making sure that the minimum and maximums aren't so far apart, and to try to meet that while also understanding that their response is going to be that it has to be a range, but we can work on that, and I'll take note of that and see what we can do.

Question from Senator 93: question about email regarding using non-utk email

Answer from George: So a couple of pieces of information for you: while waiting for people to step forward to fill the Tech Fee Advisory Board position, I did attend the first one, and at that meeting they specifically talked about the fact that they are re-evaluating how the university handles storage, and how they manage it. OIT discussed back in September about Alumni losing the utk email due to storage space. I encourage you to think about joining the Technology Advisory Fee Board to speak directly with them and so we can respond to their direct feedback from our concerns.

7. Unfinished Business - None

8. New Business

a. Action: Executive Committee Nominee Confirmations

The Senate will consider the following Senators for leadership positions in the GSS for the rest of the GSS year.

- Committee on Equity and Diversity - Adaora Ede
 - Motion: Senator 16
 - Seconds: Senator 99
 - Roll Call Vote: Majority Approves (74 votes in favor of Yes)
Adaora Ede confirmed as Chair of the Committee on Equity and Diversity

b. Discussion: Vacant Committee Positions

GSS President, George T. Fields will review vacancies on GSS committees.

- Will send out a Google Form for those interested in vacant positions
- 2 positions available for the Tech Fee Advisory Board
- Through the Faculty Senate:
 - Libraries and Information Committee (1 position)
 - Teaching and Learning Council (3 positions)
 - Research Council (3 positions)

c. Discussion: Graduate Student Housing Task Force Report

GSS President, George T. Fields will address the recommendations included in the Report and will discuss the next steps regarding housing.

- **Operational recommendations:**
 - Creating a housing coach program for graduate students; one option would be to offer stipend to current grad students who could mentor new/incoming students as a housing resource
 - Considering the enrollment of undergraduates and how that creates a strain on the housing market in Knoxville.
 - Providing direct financial support to graduate students to offset the rising cost of living for graduate students.
 - Identifying a single point of contact for grad students to access that subsidy
 - Signing a master lease agreement with at least 1 or more than 1 apartment complex within 15 minutes of campus
 - Consider a staffing structure for housing agreements etc.
 - Establish communication resources from the university for housing
 - 2024-29: prioritize affordable housing while maintaining these affordable options and keep them once on-campus housing is made available.
 - Arranging for free or discounted transportation
 - Increasing grad student assistantship stipends
 - Making sure we have master lease agreements with older apartment complex structures near campus
 - Standardize process for sharing information
 - Long-term 2030 -beyond: make sure graduate student housing is a priority for the UT Southside expansion.

4. Discussion: Upcoming Programming and Events

GSS Programming and Events Committee Chair, Austin Conte will discuss upcoming events.

- **Hockey game: Ice Bears Feb 18th:** to reserve tickets, there is an Eventbrite page link through GSS page to reserve a ticket. Ticket request opens on January 30th.
- **GPSAW events and awards in March**
- **5k Fundraiser with Knoxville Track Club**
- **Keep an eye on FB and Instagram and GSS Events page for more info and updates**

5. Discussion: Open Floor

Senators may bring up any topic of their choice to share information, start a conversation, or ask questions.

- **Senator 72:** Update on Travel Awards
 - Sent out an email on Travel awards procedure, news, and updates – please make sure to forward these to your departments
 - Deadline: February 1st (covers travel March 1-April 1)
 - Deadline : April 1 (covers travel May 1 to Aug 31)
- **Comment from Senator 44:** The educational psychology and Counseling Department has a counselor training clinic, and we offer free counseling services. So just a general plug for that. It's opt in overflow for the counseling center on campus. Obviously, there the interns there are in training - in Masters program or doctoral interns. So that's a caveat. But the one thing I wanted to specifically highlight is. We've partnered with the Title IX office for a sexual assault survivor support group that is open for undergrads or graduate students. So I know that's very niche, but needed on campus.
- **Senator 75:** Multiple places of employment at the university through multiple departments – is there a way to be paid (for grad students to be paid) at the same time for those positions?
- **Answer from George:** This is very specific, so email me more info and we will look into it.
- **Question from Senator on Zoom:** will the Counselling support group be available online?
Answer from Senator 44: not currently
- **Question from senator #9:** I had a medical emergency last semester that involved me going to the emergency room with the salary of a grad student and rising prices of everything. This puts an even greater financial strain on me. I applied for the emergency fund because medical emergencies are included in the reasons for applying, but was rejected because I have access to additional loans. Is there anything that we can do about this?
Answer from George: I think what the references is the fact that if there are financial aid considerations pertaining to student loans that limits the University's ability to give out fellowships, which is usually how that types of that type of support is administered to that end. This is a growing concern, as the cost of living is going up. The need for loans is going up. It's really putting a lot of students across the University in a tight spot in terms of receiving support for the university. That then applies to the loans instead of to the student directly, and particularly. I think that students are probably in the mindset that they would prefer to have to support now than apply to their loans that they're going to pay off over the course of a few years or hopefully, not decades right so to that point we can look at trying to establish through the University system another way for people to receive financial support that doesn't take financial aid into consideration, and we can see what we can do there. That is a big step because you're trying to affect policy at the system level, but there's nothing too big that we can't handle, or at least get

good clarification on.

9. Announcements/Member's Privilege

Senators may share out any information to the group. This could include announcing any of the following: upcoming events in their department, GSO, or anywhere on campus, sharing a deadline for a grant or scholarship, raising awareness about a new or underused resource on campus, etc.

▪

10. Final Attendance + Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Senator 16

Second: Senator 10

Session 5 adjourned at 6:46.

Next Session: Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 5:30 pm in SU 169 **Upcoming Event(s):**

- ICE BEARS Hockey Game: Saturday, February 18, 2023 at 7:30 pm at Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum
- Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week (GPSAW): March 27-31

Appendix 1 – Senate Meeting Attendance

Department by College	Voting Number	Name	Present
Architecture	1	Kay Kriegel	Y
Architecture	2	Rachel Paganelli	Y
Landscape Architecture	3	Carl Carlton	Y
Anthropology	4	Brianna Gardner	Y
Anthropology	5	—	—
Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology	6	Lauren Walden	Y
Biochemistry and Cellular and Molecular Biology	7	Morgan House	Y
Chemistry	8	Trevor Wilson	Y
Chemistry	9	Elizabeth Crumley	Y
Earth and Planetary Sciences	10	Chance Sturup	Y
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	11	Hope Ferguson (<u>PROXY</u>)	Y
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	12	Morgan Fleming	Y
English	13	Kate Wright	Y
English	14	Karen Norwood	Y
Geography	15	Kayla Rouhlac	Y
History	16	Stacie Beach	Y
Life Sciences	17	Megan Elliott	Y
Mathematics	18	Eli Brooks	Y
Mathematics	19	Shannon Hall	Y
Microbiology	20	Sayali Mulay	Y
Microbiology	21	Diana Ramirez	N
Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures	22	Morgan Schneider	Y
Music	23	Sarah Buzalewski	Y
Music	24	Alexis Kilgore	Y
Philosophy	25	Francis Nyamekeh	Y
Physics and Astronomy	26	Tanner Mengel	Y
Physics and Astronomy	27	Debshikha Banerjee	N
Political Science	28	Katherine Trubee	Y
Political Science	29	Hannah Flannery	Y
Psychology	30	Golnaz Forouzandehfar (<u>PROXY</u>)	Y
Psychology	31	Ian Warren	Y
School of Art	32	—	—
Sociology	33	Zaina Shams	Y
Theatre	34	—	—
Advertising & Public Relations	35	Josh Shockley	Y
Communication and Information	36	Winston Roberts	Y

Communication and Information	37	Jessica Barfield	Y
Information Sciences	38	Francesca Watkins	N
Information Sciences	39	—	—
Journalism & Electronic Media	40	Aman Misra	Y
Child and Family Studies	41	Hannah Thompson	Y
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies	42	Emily Ballesteros	N
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies	43	Nathan Vann	Y
Educational Psychology and Counseling	44	Taylor Baird	Y
Educational Psychology and Counseling	45	—	—
Kinesiology, Recreation, & Sport Studies	46	Emily Mayfield	Y
Kinesiology, Recreation, & Sport Studies	47	Austin Jackson	Y
Nutrition	48	Nick Gill	Y
Public Health	49	Catherine Warner	Y
Public Health	50	Sandra Wairimu	Y
Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management	51	—	—
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education	52	Tabatha Rainwater	N
Theory and Practice in Teacher Education	53	Amanda Carter	Y
Accounting and Information Management	54	Olivia Bruck	Y
Accounting and Information Management	55	Kainat Bhayani	Y
Business Analytics and Statistics	56	—	—
Business Analytics and Statistics	57	—	—
Economics	58	Ivan Anich	Y
Finance	59	—	—
Management & Entrepreneurship	60	Miranda Epperson	Y
Management & Entrepreneurship	61	Tan Kim	Y
Marketing	62	—	—
Supply Chain Management	63	—	—
Supply Chain Management	64	—	—
MBA – Working Professionals	65	—	—
MBA – Working Professionals	66	—	—
Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communications	67	Samuel T. Monarch	Y
Agricultural Leadership, Education, & Communications	68	Emoni White	Y

Agricultural & Resource Economics	69	Bishal Bista	Y
Animal Science	70	Jake Watts	Y
Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science	71	Alexis Gillmore	Y
Entomology & Plant Pathology	72	Kassie Hollabaugh	Y
Food Science	73	Fernando Rivera	Y
Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries	74	Joe DeMarchi	N
Plant Sciences	75	Kollin Johnson	Y
Cent/Interdisc Rsrch Grad Edu (Bredesen Center)	76	Adedasola Ademola	N
Cent/Interdisc Rsrch Grad Edu (Bredesen Center)	77	Sara Sultan	Y
Comparative and Experimental Medicine	78	—	—
Law	79	Jake Gray	Y
Law	80	Ronald Young	Y
Nursing	81	Jeanne Bernier	Y
Nursing	82	Adaora Ede	Y
Social Work – Distance Education	83	Marlon Wade	Y
Social Work – Distance Education	84	Suelynn Hartness	Y
Social Work – Nashville	85	Marguerite Braun	Y
Social Work – Nashville	86	Alissa White	Y
Social Work – Knoxville	87	Kristin (Nicole) Wiggs	Y
Social Work – Knoxville	88	Aritra Moulick	Y
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering	89	Austin Conte	Y
Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering	90	Rohit Ghanta	Y
Civil & Environmental Engineering	91	Mohammed Elbushra Elsheikh Elnur	Y
Civil & Environmental Engineering	92	Vivek Chawla	Y
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science	93	Mojtaba Dezvarei	Y
Electrical Engineering & Computer Science	94	Francisco Zelaya	Y
Industrial & Systems Engineering	95	Samuel Affar	Y
Industrial & Systems Engineering	96	Chulin Chen	Y
Materials Science & Engineering	97	Zane Smith	Y
Materials Science & Engineering	98	Max Neveau	N
Mechanical, Aerospace & Biomedical Engineering	99	Anirban Roy	Y

Mechanical, Aerospace & Biomedical Engineering	100	Breanna Schaeffer	Y
Nuclear Engineering	101	Emily Hutchins	Y
Nuclear Engineering	102	Evan Williams	N
Space Institute	103	Kyle Ackermann	Y
Space Institute	104	—	—
Veterinary Medicine	105	—	—
Veterinary Medicine	106	—	—

Appendix 2 – Visual Aid from Meeting (next page)

Graduate Student Senate

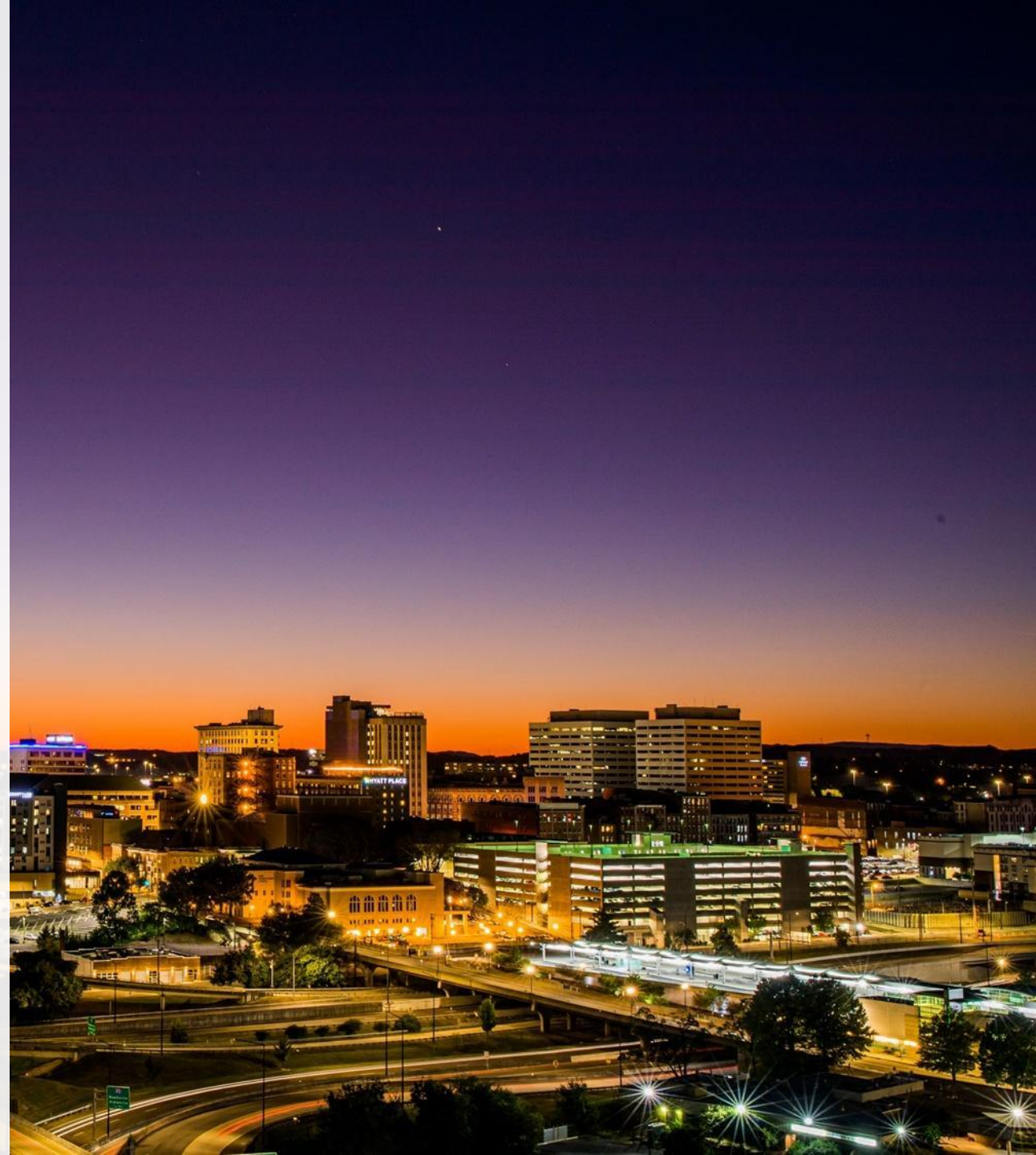
Session 5
January 25, 2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE



GRADUATE
STUDENT
SENATE



Agenda

Session Opening

1. Call to Order
2. Attendance
3. Review of Agenda
4. Public Comment

5. Guest Speakers

- A. Blake Weiss, Program Director for Basic Needs, Dean of Students Office

6. President's Report

7. Unfinished Business

8. New Business

- A. Action: Executive Committee Nominee Confirmations
- B. Discussion: Vacant Committee Positions
- C. Discussion: Housing Task Force Report
- D. Discussion: Upcoming Programming and Events
- E. Discussion: Open Floor

9. Announcements/Member's Privilege

10. Adjournment

Guest Speaker

Blake Weiss
Program Director for Basic Needs,
Dean of Students Office

blake@utk.edu

President's Report

George T. Fields
GSS President

Action: Executive Committee Nominee Confirmations

George T. Fields
GSS President

Committee on Equity and Diversity
Adaora Ede

Discussion: Vacant Committee Positions

George T. Fields
GSS President

Discussion: Housing Task Force Report

George T. Fields
GSS President

Discussion: Upcoming Programming and Events

Austin Conte
GSS Programming and Events Committee Chair

Discussion: Open Floor

- What needs are not being met on campus?
- What can the GSS be doing better to recognize and meet needs?
- What campus entities should we invite to answer questions?

Announcements/Member's Privilege

Upcoming Events

- ICE BEARS Hockey Game:
 - Saturday, February 18, 2023, 7:30 PM; Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum
- Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week (GPSAW)
 - March 27-March 31



Adjournment

Final Attendance

Refreshments are at the back of the room!

Next: 2/16/23, SU 169 @ 5:30PM