

General Assembly

Friday, 18th November 2022, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Attendance: 10 Executives and 33 Senators

Meeting Started: 3:00 pm

Call to Order: By the Vice President

Roll Call: By the Secretary (we had a quorum with a total of 10 Executives and 33 Senators in attendance).

Approval of Minutes and Agenda: Seeing no changes requested, meeting minutes were approved.

Officer Reports

President

- Center for Faculty Excellence – Graduate Student Resources
 - Hub for every resource for undergraduate and graduate student items
 - Availability of certification programs (Teaching and Learning Certified)
 - Selection of 5 at least workshops by a participant
 - Certificate awarded after completion by the Teaching and Learning
 - Safety zone training
 - They offer 100% online e-campus 7-week section
 - Available for all graduate students
 - Senators were advised to inform constituents at various levels
 - For more inquiries, reach out to Dr. Chelsea Chandler, Director of the Center for Faculty Excellence via email at chelsbw@bgsu.edu

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Vice President

- Ecobricking™ Initiative
 - Undergraduate Student Government asks for students to bring in washed single-used plastics to the USG office (Student Union Room 404)
 - Initiative from the Environmental Action Group (EAG)
- Shanklin Awards Colloquium
 - The event will be Wednesday, April 5th, 2023, from 7 - 9 pm at the Student Union
 - An event to celebrate the works done by GSS and research works
 - For more inquiries on this, reach out to GSS at gss@bgsu.edu

Academic Affairs Chair

- Information Technology Committee Updates
 - Meeting held to discuss graduate students IT needs and these needs include:
 - Grammarly on both personal and university devices, access to SPSS and any other useful qualitative and quantitative platforms unique for graduate student's research works
 - The Academic Affairs Chair will conduct a survey to assess and evaluate the IT needs of graduate students

Unfinished Business

- None to Report

New Business

- Discussion – Election Day as a Campus Holiday Resolution: Vice President
 - USG, Faculty Senate, and GSS working hand in hand to make election day a Campus Holiday
 - A 3-year plan is being proposed for this plan to be fully implemented into the academic calendar
 - At the next GA meeting, voting will be held to confirm GSS's stand on this proposition
 - For more information on this contact GSS at gss@bgsu.edu
 - The President said that at the faculty senate meeting, this proposition was well-received by most faculty members
 - Question from Philosophy Masters: Will staff members be given election day as a holiday too?
 - The Vice President will confirm this at the next meeting.
 - Question from Chair for Multicultural and Accessibility: Has the Faculty Senate informed the General Council about the proposition?
 - The President replied he was unaware at this time.
 - Question from Leadership Studies Doctoral: Will campus facilities be closed on the holiday?
 - The Vice President replied: Not all because students will not be required to go home (Just a no class/lecture day)
 - Question from the Chair for Professional Development of Graduate Students asked: Does the university not have an existing policy to allow students to leave on election day to vote?
 - The President replied that some faculty members have a policy where it is an excused absence on that day, but this is not mandated across the university
 - The Economics Masters representative advocated the need for this proposition to be passed
 - Will this proposition be passed before the 2024 general election?

- The Vice President replied that it is dependent on how fast the proposition is being reviewed by the school administration
- Is the issue not about students missing classes on election day?
 - The Vice President replied that the bigger issue is the need to reduce voters' disenfranchisement
- GSS Constitution and Bylaws Restructure Proposal: President
- GSS Constitution and Bylaws Amendment
 - <https://www.bgsu.edu/student-government/graduate-student-senate/about-gss/constitution-and-bylaws.html>
 - Each Spring, the GSS Vice President is allowed to set up a committee constituting of 3 GA Senators and 3 SEC members to review the constitution and bylaws (Constitution and Bylaws Article 5, Section 1B)
 - The last time this was done was in February 2019 due to the pandemic
 - The GSS SEC invoked Article 5, Section 3A-C which allows for GSS Emergency Clause election
 - According to Article 5 Section 1C, the proposed constitutional amendment must be voted by at least four-fifths of the voting membership of the GSS senators' attendance
 - Current structure of the GSS SEC
 - 7 elected positions
 - 6 appointed officers (by recommendation)
 - GSS SEC Proposal
 - GSS SEC proposed that all current six (6) appointed positions on the GSS SEC become elected positions
 - This will include a change of title for the role of Chair for Multicultural and Accessibility Graduate Student Affairs and the Chair for Publicity and Social Programming of Graduate Student Events as these are too long and poorly worded

- 2 newly appointed positions for the Chair of First-year Ph.D. students and Chair of First-year Masters students
- The list of sections that would be affected by the passing of the GSS SEC Proposal
 - Article 3, SEC Section 1A and B
 - Article 4, Election Section 5
- Motion to go into the discussion was put forward by Philosophy Masters Representative and was seconded by Biology Master Representative
 - Question from Philosophy Masters: Do all appointed positions have applications?
 - The President replied: Yes, all except for the Chair for Online Representation
 - The Philosophy Masters asked that all senators be carried along as regards the proper vetting of the interested candidates for these new roles
 - The Chair for Multicultural and Accessibility Graduate Student Affairs suggested that attaching representative rather than the chair to the title of elected officers is much better
 - Question from Economics Masters: Is the proposal going to be immediate?
 - The President replied yes
 - Question from Philosophy Masters: Would candidates be asked to give manifestos before voting commences?
 - The President said that applications are received by GSS SEC from interested candidates then each candidate has 5 minutes to give a speech/manifesto about the role they are applying for during the GA meeting

- The Economics Masters Representative appealed for more flexibility with the application for the open positions because the semester is almost over
 - The Chair for Multicultural and Accessibility Graduate Student Affairs agreed to this
- Motion to end the discussion by the Philosophy Masters and seconded by the College of Musical Arts
- Motion to move to vote was put forward by the Representative-At-Large and this was seconded by Philosophy Masters Representative
- Voting items (Need for four-fifths of the voting members for this to pass)
- To change appointed positions to elected positions
 - Number of voting members: 30 ($4/5 = 24$ votes for proposal to pass)
 - Vote in favor of the proposal: 25
 - Vote against the proposal: 5
- **The proposal was passed as it reached a quorum**

- Presentation of Budget: Treasurer/Vice President
 - An honorarium for all elected positions (taking into consideration the passing of the constitutional amendment)
 - GSS plans to sponsor more promotional items
 - The Charles E. Shanklin Award for Research Excellence is a big part of the GSS budget
 - \$14,000 budgeted for this event
 - Budget includes new creative award categories for students who can present their research in a creative way
 - Budget for Funds for Professional Development
 - 40% increase in applications submitted when compared to previous years

- More funds were allocated due to the availability of carry-over funds i.e., allocated funds for FPD in previous years not used due to the pandemic
- New Initiative from GSS SEC: Co-sponsorship Initiative Program
 - Sponsorship of symposiums and events that can be of benefit to graduate students
 - Funds in the budget have been allocated for this
- For more information on the budget, kindly reach out to GSS SEC via email at gss@bgsu.edu. The budget is an open access document, meaning it can be viewed at any time.

Guest Speakers

- Mayor Mike Aspacher of Bowling Green, Ohio.(Pre-Recorded)
 - A motion to table the interview video of the Mayor due to time was put forward by the Philosophy Masters representative and this was seconded by the College of Musical Arts representative
- President Rodney Rogers
 - Questions
 - He was asked about his leadership strategy and style
 - He has been opportune to work in different organizations and with people over the years
 - A few things that have been helpful for him include curiosity i.e., trying to understand the perspectives about things
 - Asking questions is an important skill for any leader. Also, the mindset of having the university's interest at heart has also been helpful.
 - He thinks about the university and the public good
 - A good phrase that he uses is, "Leaders know when to lead and when to follow"

- Question on the cost of living and stipend in Bowling Green
 - Why has there not been an increase in graduate students' stipend?
 - The inflation was initially thought to be short-term
 - However, that has not been the case.
 - The university understands the need and urgency for graduate students to have an appropriate stipend to cover their needs
 - Also, the university minimized an increase in tuition over the years
 - The Provost and the Deans have been examining and evaluating budgets trying to figure out actions that can be taken on the graduate stipend
 - Funding sources at the University are in 3 folds
 - Tuition - 73%
 - State Share of Instruction (support received from the state) - 21%
 - Other which could include private philanthropy, federal grants, and foundation grants - 6%
 - One of the problems that the University has encountered with funding is that the State Share of Instruction has not factored in the current inflation into the budget given to the University
 - Another one is that 85% of the university population are undergraduate students and their fees have been fixed so the possibility of an increase from this avenue is slim
 - The University is left with the option of Others which includes private philanthropy, federal grants, and foundation grants which account for about 6% of the university's source of income

- Two options available are
 - To raise additional funds
 - More efficiency so as to reallocate existing funds
- Question from Philosophy Masters
 - The school administration needs to evaluate graduate students' welfare holistically by considering other aspects other than for example, health insurance, parking lot availability, and so on
 - The University administration has been examining all the budgets affecting graduate student's lives on campus
- Question from Representative-At-Large
 - Taking into consideration that due to inflation, an increase in stipend may still not be sufficient for graduate students, can the University do more in lowering the level of expectation from graduate students in terms of workload and may be additional duties?
 - The experience and level of expectation differ among graduate students and what is important for the school administration is to determine means and methods to adjust the culture.
 - The challenge here is to find the balance between maintaining quality to continuously attract young prospects without making academic life and structure too rigorous for graduate students
 - He said that all of these questions and discussions would be raised in his meetings with the Provost and Deans
- Question from Leadership Studies Doctoral
 - How accountable and transparent is the school administration with all the ongoing and completed projects on campus?

- Has the school administration looked at other ways in assisting graduate students, especially International students because they are most vulnerable to inflation due to currency exchange rates?
 - The International students are an important part of BGSU's community in terms of broadening the community and global perspective
 - The school administration has been working on getting funds from external bodies
 - The Pay Forward funds which is a one-time allocation to all students
 - These funds would be paid back by the awarded students when they are financially capable of doing so
 - Additionally, the school administration is looking for other ways to find additional funds through NSF, NIH, and federal agencies
- Is there potential to add the program name/degree name on the diploma for graduate students? Is there any application for this and who should be reached for this?
 - The University's Registrar said that the student major's programs have not been inputted on diplomas in the past, only the degrees are inputted on diplomas
 - Degrees are on diplomas and details of academics are on the academic transcript
- What is being done to support graduate students who are parents?
 - He reiterated the need to support nursing mothers and parents in the university
 - He suggested that we reach out to Jodi Webb, the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, and Ben Batey, the Chief Health, and Wellness Officer

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- They will shed better light on this issue

Announcements

- Undergraduate Student Government working on a petition to put in a crosswalk between parking Lot E and Thurstin.
- The Chair for Multicultural and Accessibility Graduate Student Affairs said that a student reached out and asked about the possibility of the University recognizing Columbus Day as an important day instead of being called the People Indigenous Day

Adjournment

- The Philosophy Masters representative motioned to adjourn the meeting, and this was seconded by the Representative-At-Large
- Meeting Ended: 5:04 pm