



Graduate Student Senate
111A McFall Center
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403-0181
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<http://www.bgsu.edu/gss>

General Assembly

Friday, November 12, 2021 – 3:00–5:00 pm.

ATTENDANCE: 12 Executives and 37 Senators

MEETING STARTED: 3:01 pm

CALL TO ORDER: By the Vice President

MOTION TO START THE MEETING: CSP Representative motioned to start the meeting, seconded by ACS (MA) Representative.

ROLL CALL: By the Secretary (we had a quorum with a total of 12 Executives and 37 Senators in attendance)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND AGENDA: CSP Representative moved to approve, seconded by College of Musical Art

GUESTS SPEAKERS

➤ **Ben Batey, Chief Health Officer**

- He started by responding to the questions sent ahead of time

➤ **Other Questions:** Sent Earlier

- **From Online Affairs Chair:**

- I understand that mental health services and resources are offered for all students in need on campus. However, I have had a huge increase in students reporting to me (instructor) that they are experiencing mental health issues and need to be absent from classes for long-term periods because they are seeking services of campus: usually at home and in other cities and states. **What is being done by the college to make accessibility**

and outreach for services easier and more available for students unfamiliar or unaware of services?

- To piggyback on the last question. Are there any initiatives/programs aimed at de-stigmatizing mental health services for students? I am thinking of maybe peer groups, clubs, or events that allow students to seek out resources for future mental health services in a fun and low-key environment (maybe food involved)?

○ **Ben's Response**

- The counseling center has been providing virtual-mental health visits for individuals (remote students)
- The counselors are only licensed to practice within Ohio
- Try to connect remote students to services at their locations (local mental health resources)
- New initiative: Partnering with other agencies that can do virtual-mental health visits outside of Ohio
- Increased access in group therapy sessions
 - Use of community to help provide care and see more students
 - Peer to peer groups where students with common interests help each other
- De-stigmatizing mental health care and building a community of care, especially in mental health and suicide prevention.

○ **From Multicultural and Accessibility Chair:**

- What resources and/or recommendations do you have for grad students struggling to prioritize school, mental health, and physical health?
- What advice do you have for grad students that may notice another grad student struggling who finds it difficult to accept and may not feel comfortable reaching out for help?

○ **Ben's Response**

- Counselling Center has a program Training: Start The Conversation
 - To help people with mental health issues as a peer in a supportive way and nonjudgmental

○ **From Media and Communication (PhD) Representative:**

- With nearly 10% of people on campus with approved vaccine exemptions, what does this mean for the Spring semester? Are we still going to be requiring masks, regardless of vaccination status? Will instructors finally be placed in rooms with proper social distancing?
- Would it be possible to get a numerical breakdown of the exemptions? (medical vs. 'personal conscious', etc)

- **Ben's Response**
 - 10% of about 22000 people (including faculties and staff) have asked for exemptions
 - Covid-19 Protocols refer to the entire community, not just the university community
 - The Wood County currently sits at 280/100,000 cases, which is well past the rate we could release the mask mandate.
 - Anticipate completing the semester with the Mask Mandate
 - Plan to re-evaluate the Mask Mandate in the Spring semester.
 - Until case numbers come down overall in the greater community and on campus, we will probably maintain the Mask Mandate
 - Numerical breakdown of exemptions: 47% are religious, 43% conscious, 9-10% medical for the breakdown

- **From Mathematics Ph.D. Representative:**
 - I would like to hear from Chief health officer about students' health insurance and how the premium can be brought down.

- **Ben's Response**
 - Healthcare costs keep rising
 - The insurance companies raise premiums to keep up with what they are paying out
 - Last year the cost was kept flat through negotiation
 - University plans to shop around and negotiate for low premiums rate
 - Continuing to fight for lower premiums.

- **From Environmental Affairs Chair:**
 - Are there any opportunities for discounted fitness/gym use for graduate students? We don't always take 8 credits a semester, which means we have to pay more to use the gym, and that's not affordable for everyone.

- **Ben's Response**
 - Question of Equity if the grad students don't pay to get access while the undergrads do
 - Looking for ways to expand/offer access to grad students for free or at a lower cost on days when the Rec. center is less busy
 - Not sure they can eliminate the cost even for grad students below 8 credits, but there can be other ways to provide access

- **Dr. Faith Ann DeNardo, Director of the Wellness Connection**
 - She talks about the Wellness Connection
 - Mindfulness workshops

- Two sessions per semester (4 weeks sessions)
 - Move for your mood
 - Free sessions
 - Ties mental and physical health and how important they are
 - Visit the Thrive Portion of the website of Recreation and Wellness to access the free activities
 - Willing to do more and design workshops specifically for Graduate Students
- **Other Questions**
 - **Do you think the pandemic has changed the culture of the campus? How?**
 - **Ben's Response**
 - We're seeing a cultural shift and flexibility
 - Virtual meetings, even when people are in the same building
 - Advocate for "if you're sick, stay home."
 - Hoping to create more opportunities for people to engage virtually if needed
 - **Faith's Response**
 - Culture shift has happened
 - Social engagement has been affected
 - Some people are struggling to keep up and relearn
 - **What is the ideal Vaccination Percentage**
 - **Ben's Response**
 - In public health, that is an unknown.
 - Theories in public health that eventually Covid-19 will become an endemic and no longer a pandemic
 - As we see a change in treatment offerings and the level of threat, we're moving towards Covid-19 becoming eventually endemic
 - We aren't only affected nationally but globally
 - Tech will become better so we can combat the impact of Covid-19. 1918 Flu pandemic took 5 years to stabilize.
 - We are ahead due to tech available to us, so hopefully, we'll have a shorter time to reach the process.
- **Vaccine Exemptions**
 - **College Student Personnel Representative**
 - I have a question regarding the vaccine exemption requests. Are all requests being granted submitted, or are they being reviewed extensively to see if it is a valid exemption request?
 - **Bens Response:**
 - Experts are reviewing vaccines exemptions before being granted.

- A lot have been denied for further information, had to have dialogue to understand.
 - Everything has been vetted, doing our best to be flexible.
- **Media and Communication (PhD) Representative**
 - Vaccine exemption question: Can you take us through what qualifies as a religious & personal exemption?
- **Bens Response**
 - People provide religious support based on beliefs about not getting vaccinated.
 - People also have long-term concern as to a 5-year profile, for personal exemption.
- **POPC (MA) Representative)**
 - These are more comments than questions. They're spicy, so brace yourself.
 - Let's not pat ourselves on the back too quickly about handling vaccines. I had a breakthrough case within three weeks of being on campus; it felt like my skin was peeling off of my body. It sucked.
 - With 90% of vaccine exemptions being non-medical in nature, the vaccine mandate would appear to come down to "everyone has to get vaccinated unless they don't want to." This is an ineffectual policy.
 - The rec center requires students to wear a mask "except when exercising." While exercising is when students are breathing the hardest, and thus at largest risk for spreading and contracting COVID. Who is responsible for this ridiculous policy?
 - Perhaps the reason COVID is becoming endemic is because of half-hearted policies like those above and a lack of administrative will to take the pandemic seriously.

➤ **Health Insurance**

- **Mathematics (PhD) Representative**
 - I am sure premiums can come down if we enroll a large number of BGSU students. What efforts are taken to ensure we enroll more students so as to lower premiums?
 - Especially TAs, RAs, GAs, any efforts from the graduate college to subsidize this amount?
- **Media and Communication (PhD) Representative**
 - To go off of Joseph's point: International students are required to take BGSU's insurance, but many cannot afford it (especially those with insufficient stipends). Financial welfare has huge implications on

graduate students' mental health. Are there any efforts to make access to insurance more affordable, especially for international students?

- **Ben's Response:**
 - Less and fewer students are taking the university insurance, which also affects the cost.
 - People are shopping around; they are looking for cheaper options. Unfortunately, international students have little flexibility.
 - International students need to pay all at once, whereas domestic students can split payments between semesters.
 - Ben will look more into it.
 - Email questions to health@bgsu.edu and our team will follow up
- **Treasurer**
 - Are health insurance costs transparent to international students before they come to BGSU?
- **Bens Response:**
 - For more questions/information on student health insurance, reach out to Marlene Reynolds: <https://www.bgsu.edu/student-insurance-program.html>
- **The President**
 - International students are required to pay the total amount of insurance upfront as against domestic students paying gradually, experiencing economic strain
- **Ben's Response:**
 - The first time he heard that
 - He will follow up with Marlene to see about possibilities to make it flexible and make an adjustment to be comparable with domestic students
- **Access to the Rec Center and the question of Equity**
 - **ACS (PhD) Representative**
 - Regarding graduate student rec center fees and the "equity concern," - graduate students pay more per credit for their tuition fees, as well as higher general fees.
 - Additionally, more graduate students must take on the financial burden of student health insurance requirements than undergraduate students. Have these points been addressed with the rec center leadership?
- **Senators can send questions into GSS email (gss@bgsu.edu) by the end of next week or reach out to Ben and Faith directly**

OFFICERS REPORTS

- The President: Reported on
 - Healthy Minds Survey
 - Hazing Training Completion: Training available on Canvas and Bridge
 - Race and Democracy Course
 - For constituency members teaching undergrads
 - Advocate for the course to be available for graduate students, faculties and staff
 - CCAMPIS
 - Child care grant
 - Dropped contact information for Stacey: staceyh@bgsu.edu
 - VP is working on getting Stacey to speak to GA next semester
- Treasurer: She reported on:
 - Funding GSS FPD Allocation Committee
 - 91 applications with 63 offered award
 - Appeal process with the applicants
 - Fall 2021 Regalia Decision Committee
 - 5 applicants, 4 awarded
 - Canvas more for students to know about the Regalia resources
 - GSS Sponsorship Opportunities
 - Dean Goberman suggested we partner with the Center for Faculty and Excellence for training and support for graduate students
 - Student application boards will meet to discuss this in the future
 - GSS Mix and Mingle Table Event
 - Have a table at the BTSU on Wednesday, December 1, from 12 pm-7 pm
 - Only two GSS people can be there; hence sign up to be there as we have 12 open slots
 - Sign up with this link:
https://falconbgsumy.sharepoint.com/:x/g/personal/agtaylo_bgsu_edu/EbCAzZsIFqRLtV3uFI_jzM8BAPq-1fWDtQsGiwsHMokwQg?e=teFDYn
- The Vice President

- If you have received a letter and FPO for funding decision, do so promptly
- Keep an eye out for appeals, be patient
- Senators should inform her before they forward Zoom invites/links to proxy before the meetings
- Multicultural/Disability Affairs Chair: He reported on:
 - Committee's perspectives on diversity & related issues on campus
 - Interest in inter-departmental collaborations and research
 - Students feel like they have to be the encyclopedia of their race or culture. Are there any standards for faculty to have diversity competence?
 - Ways for students to increase their cultural competency.
 - Students want to continue having diverse conversations, and how can they support and be supported based on their identity?
- Professional Development Chair: She reported on:
 - The committee came up with a canvas questionnaire regards their expectations for the PD Day
 - Send out emails and post fliers on BGSU Instagram pages by Monday, November 15
 - Professional Development Day: November 18, 10 am-12 pm online
 - Takeover Tuesday with the Marvin Center Instagram Page – President suggested
 - Reach out to alumni for speaking engagements – Senators can bring suggestions from their constituencies
- International Affairs Chair (The President - Interim): She reported on:
 - Committee's discussion
 - The realities international students are facing
 - Training on canvas
 - Access to support in the first few weeks of classes as they are new to the learning and teachings here
 - Insurance and accessibility – She will follow up with Marlene

OLD/UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- None

NEW BUSINESS

- None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- CMA is having a CANTUS Concert Today at 8 pm
- Professional Day- please come, also inform your constituent about it: November 18 from 10 am-12noon
- Please send any further questions/comments/concerns for Ben and Faith by Thursday (November 18) at midnight

ADJOURNMENT: Counseling (MA) Representative moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by CMA/Computer Science Representative.

MEETING ENDED: 4:14 pm.