Logo_4C.tif Graduate Student Senate

402B Bowen-Thompson Student Union

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**Graduate Student Senate General Assembly**

**Friday, November 13, 2015**

**3:00-5:00pm**

**Gallery- McFall**

**Handouts:** GA Minutes 10/30/15, Offer Letter

**Censured:** Physics & Astronomy, African People’s Association, Chinese Scholars Association, Health Care Administration Association

**Absences:** Accounting (1), Art (1), MBA & MOD (2 nonconsecutive), Computer Science (1), Criminal Justice (1), Economics (1), Food & Nutrition (1), Geology (1), Applied Geospatial Science (1), Graduate Art Students (1), Leadership Studies (1), Media & Communication (1), Musical Arts (1)

**Agenda**

* Call to Order – Graduate Student Senate (GSS) Vice President Julia Largent called the meeting to order, and welcomed everyone General Assembly (GA).
* Roll Call – GSS Secretary Jeffrey Moore took the roll, and asked the senators to remind anyone they see coming in late to check with him before they leave or else they will be counted as absent.
* Approval of Minutes – Sociology made a motion that the minutes from the Oct. 30 GA be approved, which was seconded by the Representative-at-Large. The “ayes” carried and the minutes were approved.
* **Dr. Mary Ellen Mazey, President, Bowling Green State University** – Pres. Mazey thanked GSS for inviting her to come and speak today, and Julia complimented her on her beautiful orange coat. Pres. Mazey began her talk with a short summary of the state of the university today: Enrollment and retention is up among undergraduate and graduate student populations, and initiatives to update programming and programming changes have attracted more students. BGSU is increasingly multicultural and this greater sense of diversity enriches everyone at the university. BGSU continues to be listed in national rankings of both graduate and undergraduate programs, and Pres. Mazey cares deeply about the quality and value of degrees awarded by the university. Over the last five years 25 buildings have either been opened or significantly renovated, including residence halls, the Stroh Center, the Wolfe Center for the Performing Arts, and the Falcon Health Center. This fall, the newly removed South Hall will open as the new home for the School of Media and Communications, and renovations will begin on Mosley Hall, which is slated for a fall 2017 unveiling. Future renovations/additions to Hannah Hall will be made to expand facilities for the College of Business Administration. Pres. Mazey concluded by saying the university continues to work on bringing new programs to the university, particularly master’s-level professional degrees, with plans for a new Master’s Degree in Forensic Science to be presented to the Board of Trustees at their December meeting.
  + Student Development Association asked about a recent email discussing graduate student work hours, how this relates to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and whether or not this will have an impact on graduate student stipends. Pres. Mazey said she was not aware of the email in question, but generally, the university must make sure graduate assistants are not working more than the amount of time they are contracted for, which is typically 20 hours. She said that ACA mandates graduate assistants cannot work more than the amount of hours they are contracted for without the university having to change their employment status. Pres. Mazey also said that in the past few years, the number of state and federal mandates the university must adhere to has increased; included among these are a report to the state regarding how the university can reduce student tuition without impacting the quality of the education provided.
    - Maryam stated that the Provost was also looking into this, and had formed a committee to discuss and clarify these policies. Maryam expressed concern that no graduate students were on the committee, and Pres. Mazey agreed that there should be a student representative on the committee. She said she would speak to the Provost about this
  + GuSTO asked about low enrollment courses, and whether nor not these courses would still be offered. He is concerned about programs in his department designed for students pursuing advanced degrees that may only have a few students per semester, and whether or not students will be able to meet their degree requirements. Pres. Mazey said these types of courses are typically exempt from cancellation due to low enrollment, but she is working with the Dean of the Graduate College to clarify the language regarding courses for students in advanced degree programs to ensure there are no errors in this regard.
  + MPASA asked about United Nations climate change negotiations that begin on November 30. Specifically, the senator wanted to know what the administration was doing to meet Pres. Obama’s call for public colleges and universities to show support for meaningful commitment to addressing climate change, and what BGSU is doing in regards to this call. Pres. Mazey said she is committed to seeing BGSU be as environmentally conscious as possible, and that she will speak to the various parties on campus involved in sustainability efforts to let them know the graduate student population is concerned about and interested in their efforts.
  + World Student Association asked about opportunities for graduate students to study abroad. The senator said he would like to have that opportunity, but finds it to be much more difficult at the graduate level than at the undergraduate level, and wondered if anything was being done to address this concern. Pres. Mazey agree, saying that study abroad opportunities have been very important to her on a personal level, and that she previously worked at institutions that had these opportunities for graduate students. She mentioned that she would like to see this as part of the university’s internationalization plan, even if only for a week or two out of the semester, and would continue to advocate for greater possibilities for graduate students to study abroad.
    - Sociology said she has also explored this possibility, having spent a lot of her time as an undergraduate studying abroad. She is worried that she would get off track in her degree program if she explored study abroad opportunities, or that she might lose her assistantship. She asked whether there was a possibility of instituting teacher exchanges with partnering universities abroad that would allow students to continue fulfilling their assistantship duties while studying abroad. Pres. Mazey said this was an excellent idea and would make this suggestion to the appropriate parties on campus.
  + Theatre and Film asked if Pres. Mazey could speak to the university’s commitment to hiring tenure track faculty, as opposed to non-tenure track or adjunct faculty. The senator said having good faculty is always important to any program, and wanted to know where the university stood considering so much of the higher education faculty in America is made up of non-tenure track and adjunct faculty. Pres. Mazey agreed that a strong tenure track faculty is vital to the life of the university, second only to the students themselves. She said that when she became president in 2011, about 38% of the total faculty population at BGSU was non-tenure track or adjunct faculty, which was above the national average. She opened up negotiations with the faculty union and made comparisons with benchmark universities across the country, and found that one of the major problems was that faculty salaries were too low to attract top quality faculty. Pres. Mazey is happy to report that the total number of non-tenure track and adjunct faculty has been reduced as a result of these efforts, and most of the faculty-level hiring done in the last three years has been tenure track. She also said that 30 hiring searches were currently under way across the university, and while she did not have the exact numbers available she was certain the majority of those would be tenure track
* **Stacy Patnode, Office of Disability Services** – Ms. Patnode thanked everyone for opportunity to speak, but wondered how you follow the president of the university? Ms. Patnode gave an overview of the mission of the Office of Disability Services, and how it works to ensure students have access to the services they need to succeed. The Office of Disability Services currently works with about 830 students, which is a dramatic increase from years past. She sees this as a positive because it means more students with disabilities are coming to college. Her office provides accommodations for students, faculty and staff as needed. The Office of Disability Services works with a broad spectrum of disabilities, including students with ADHD, disabilities on the autism spectrum, psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, mobility impairment, and increasingly students with chronic health conditions. The Office has seen an increase in the level of complexity of diagnoses, and many students now seek assistance with several issues at once. Students, including graduate students, who may need accommodations because of a documented disability, should contact us the Office to see what services are most appropriate for them. All of contact information for the Office of Disability Services can be found online at bgsu.edu/disabilityservices. Ms. Patnode made a point to say that their office provides students with services to get equal access to university experiences, but does not modify essential course requirements. All students must still meet those, as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Office is governed by different laws than high schools, which may cause confusion with incoming students, who may be used to receiving different accommodations than what BGSU is able to provide. The types of accommodations typically offered by the Office of Disability Services includes extended testing time, limited distractions, allowing students to write essays with computers instead of by hand, recording course lectures, providing large print books or books in braille, arranging foreign language substitution, and providing customized attendance letters for missing class. Housing accommodations on campus can also be arranged, including getting dorm air conditioning for students with asthma, and arranging for private restroom facilities for students with Crohn’s disease.
  + Culture Club asked how students get in touch with the office during their application and/or orientation. Ms. Patnode said there is a spot on the “Next Steps” portion of the admissions application website that lets students indicate they may need services, and this helps the Office reach out to prospective students. She also mentioned that high school guidance counselors are increasingly encouraging families of prospective students to reach out by telephone or email to ask questions, or to schedule sessions with the Office during campus visits to inquire about accommodations.
* **Dr. Jane Rosser, Director of Service Learning** – Dr. Rosser thanked GSS for inviting her to speak about the 2016 MLK Day of Service. She said she was happy Pres. Mazey saw her, as this is one of the few times when she was wearing orange and brown clothing. Before speaking about the 2016 MLK Day of Service, Dr. Rosser took a moment to elaborate on an answer to a question from Pres. Mazey’s presentation regarding study abroad and international service learning opportunities. Dr. Rosser said she is working with the Provost’s office on developing international service learning courses, and creating a new pipeline for students to add study abroad to their degree programs. Dr. Rosser said she knows many people can’t afford to take time off from their degree programs, and that many students take summer jobs to pay for school, so short term courses – such as during spring break or early in the summer – might be a solution to this problem. There are also programs at the undergraduate level that graduate students may still be able to enroll in, or help co-facilitate with faculty whose research overlaps with student interests. She encouraged any interested parties to check with Education Abroad to see what opportunities may be open to them. Primarily, Dr. Rosser came to GA to speak about the 2016 MLK Day of Service, which is the largest day of service the university currently sponsors. The Day of Service is a way for the university to honor the legacy of Dr. King and all that legacy stands for. The event draws large numbers of undergraduate volunteers, but the volunteers and the university would like to have more graduate involvement to help strengthen the event and deepen reflection on the importance and purpose of the event. Graduate students often serve as drivers, taking volunteers to work sites, but Dr. Rosser would welcome graduate students who want to volunteer on a team working on an issue of importance to them. Dr. Rosser is asking the senators to spread the word about the event among their constituents, and to speak with their constituents about the agency and impact of volunteer work. One of the other areas of focus has to do with the development of new faculty, and each year faculty learning communities work to design and deliver new service learning courses. Three years ago graduate students started taking part in this development, and all previous students who have moved on to faculty positions have had the opportunity to teach the courses they designed as part of this program.
  + College Student Personnel asked for examples of past volunteer projects to help get a sense of what the Day of Service is like. According to Dr. Rosser, last year there were 40 community partners and 800 volunteers. Projects included working for an animal welfare organization, a YMCA in Toledo, a project with Bowling Green Parks and Recreation, and working with older adults in the community. This year, Dr. Rosser is working to build more academic partnerships.
* Officers, Chairs, and Committee Reports
  + International Affairs Chair/Multicultural Affairs Chair
    - Shahad Al-Doori/Derron Borders –
      * A Trip Around the World: An Intercultural Soiree – Derron was not able to attend the meeting, but Shahad reminded everyone that the event is part of International Education Week, and said there were flyers for the event on the back table. Other events include an Arabic comedian coming to campus next week, and talks about immigration. Interested parties can speak to her, or see the International Student Services (ISS) webpage for more information. The flyer is also available on OrgSync. ISS is also coordinating shuttles to the Detroit airport Saturday, December 19, at 8:00 a.m. The cost is $20.00 per person. Domestic students are welcome as well, but priority will be given to international students. She also encouraged international students to check their I-20 expirations and to be sure to renew these if needed
        + Sociology asked if a separate email with information about the drop off and pick up events from the airport can be sent. Shahad said when all the details have been finalized, this information will be send to Julia to distribute to the senators
  + Treasurer
    - Scott Chappuis
      * Fall 2015 Budget Report – For the 2015-2016 academic year, including rollover from the previous year, GSS has an operating budget of $47,735.00. A few line items worth noting: GSS hosted Grad Bash during Graduate Student Orientation (GSO), and provided boxed lunches for the incoming graduate students in attendance at a cost of $5,000.00 (the actual cost of the lunches was $5,378.75, but the remainder of the cost was covered by the Graduate College). $800.00 has been earmarked for event sponsorship, of which $220.00 has been used ($100.00 was given to the MLK Day of Service; $120.00 was given to India Student Association for Diwali Mela). $2,500.00 was allocated for the Regalia Award this semester, of which $1.999.75 has been awarded. $11,500.00 was allocated for Funding for Professional Development (FPD), of which $11,435.00 has been awarded. Scott reminded everyone that students and organizations do not always claim the money they are awarded, so some of this money may actually return to GSS for use next semester. Bottom line: GSS is operating under budget, which makes Scott very happy. Anyone with additional questions or concerns about the budget should contact Scott or Julia. .
        + Philosophy asked for clarification on when and how to apply for event sponsorship. Scott and Julia said this was an ongoing process throughout the year, and interested organizations should send an email to gss@bgsu.edu with all the pertinent information (name of department/program/organization/event, date of event, amount requested, etc.). Once the email request has been received, the information will be sent to the appropriate parties to determine funding eligibility.
        + Theatre and Film asked for more information about the money spent for Grad Bash this year, given that GSS went over budget on spending for Grad Bash last year. More to the point, GSS bought more food than was needed for the previous year’s event, and wanted to know whether this had happened again. The senator wanted to make sure the money spent on this event was well spent. Scott said Grad Bash this year was open to all incoming graduate students, not just graduate teaching associates (TAs), so more students were able to attend. Scott also said GSS worked more closely with the Graduate College to make sure an appropriate amount of money was spent on the event, and that some price changes with catering services contributed to being under budget this year.
  + Disability Affairs
    - Jackie Luedtke – Jackie was not able to attend the meeting, but asked Julia to remind the senators that she is still looking for people to serve on the Disability Committee. Please contact Julia or Maryam if you are interested in serving on this committee. If you previously expressed interest in serving on the committee but you are no longer willing or able to do so, please let Jackie, Julia, or Maryam know.
  + Student Affairs
    - Krystal Allen
      * Rec Center – Krystal distributed a draft handout detailing some of the costs associated with using the Rec Center. Full time graduate students can use the Rec Center for free; part time graduate students pay a prorated fee. Krystal has been speaking with the executive board of the Rec Center about getting a plan for family members of graduate students. A copy of this flyer was previously given to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) to review, who asked if information about the cost of using the climbing wall, and the cost of memberships for children of graduate students could be added to the flyer. Krystal is looking for feedback on the flyer, which she will give to the executive board of the Rec Center. A copy of the flyer will be distributed to all graduate students once it has been finalized, which Krystal hopes will be in December.
        + Biological Sciences asked why the Rec Center was not open on Sunday. Philosophy said they previously asked about this and was told they did not have the funding to provide staff needed to open the Center on Sunday. Philosophy clarified by saying that beyond certain hours they are contracted to be open with the university, the Center needs funding from outside sources. As an example, the Center is currently open later hours on Saturday because one of the men’s athletic teams paid to make use of the Center during those hours, which meant the Center could be open for everyone. The director of the Center has previously said if an organization in the community is willing to provide funding to “rent” out the center on Sundays, the Center can be open at that time.
        + MPASA asked why students must pay an extra fee to use the rock wall. Krystal said she was not sure, but had asked for clarification on that issue and would report back once she had an answer. The fee to use the rock wall is currently $40.00 per semester. Geology said they suspect the rock wall costs extra because the equipment needed to use the rock wall is expensive.
      * Any issues? – As the Student Affairs Representative, Krystal’s job is to make address any issues impacting graduate student experiences outside the classroom. She opened the floor and asked if there are any issues the senators or their constituents would like her to work on. Graduate students can also contact her, Julia, or Maryam, or use the new Graduate Student Issues Form to report issues if/when they come up.
        + Philosophy asked if there was an office, or some other channel on campus, to refer someone who may need counselling services if they are not able to directly approach the person in question. Krystal said she was not aware of any such procedure, and asked Jodi Webb if she knew of any resources that could help in this situation. Jodi said the Dean of Students website has an incident report form that could be used in this case. Jodi also mention that she is part of a care committee that meets weekly to talk about various student issues, and that she might be able to bring up this issue with that committee
        + Theatre and Film asked if it would be possible to inquire about temporary (15 minutes or less) parking spots near the campus library for people who only need to pick up books or resources without staying on campus for an extended period of time. Julia suggested Krystal bring this up with Parking Services. Maryam, Michael, Mallory, Jess, and Sociology also expressed concerns about the reduced number of handicapped parking spots on campus due to current construction projects.
  + Environmental Affairs
    - Caitlin Buhr – Caitlin was not able to attend the meeting, but asked Julia to share with everyone a link to a form where interested parties can submit ideas for improving sustainability on campus. The form can be found at the following link (this is also available on the BGSU Sustainability website): https://www.bgsu.edu/campus-sustainability/intern-volunteer/student-green-initiative-fund.html
  + Vice President
    - Julia Largent
      * Crosswalks Survey – A resolution has been proposed to ask for additional crosswalks from campus, across Thurston St. Julia has created a brief survey to see how often, when, and how students cross this street. The results of this survey will be used to help acquire funding for the crosswalks, and to find out the best locations for these crosswalks. The survey is still open, but will be closing at 12:00 p.m. (midnight) on Sunday, November 15, 2015. If you or members of your constituency have not yet done so, please take a few minutes to complete this survey. The survey can be found at the following link: <http://bit.ly/Crosswalks>
      * The university Board of Trustees will be meeting on December 4, 2015. Rolfe Richie, the graduate student representative to the Board, will be at GSS that day to report on the findings of the meeting, and has asked Julia to solicit issues GSS would like to see discussed at the meeting.
        + Sociology said they felt issues related to student fees have still not been adequately addressed, and would like to know whether these fees can be lowered or eliminated now that enrollment and retention are up, or if the fees can be made tax exempt.
        + Biology Graduate Student Association asked about health insurance plans for international graduate students, and wanted to know if they could get more plans, and plans that are more comparable to the plans offered to domestic graduate students and faculty/staff. Julia advised the senator to speak to Shahad about this first.
  + President
    - Maryam Kamran
      * Offer Letters – Maryam distributed a draft copy of language that would be included in all acceptance notices sent to prospective students informing them of potential fees, and directing them to the fee calculator online. This draft language, if approved, would be required by the Graduate College starting next academic year as a way of ensuring that all incoming students are properly informed of the fees they would be expected to cover, and what fees are and are not covered by tuition waivers from their departments. The hope is that this new language will make it easier for incoming students to financially plan for their time at BGSU. This draft language was presented to Faculty Senate last week, and that body was in favor of the draft language.
        + Keji said it took her a long time to realize the scholarships she received from her department did not cover the costs of out of state tuition during the second year of her program, and asked whether or not this could be addressed in the letter. Julia said that policy was department specific, and this letter was attempting to address fees faced on the Graduate College level, but that she agrees this information should be communicated earlier.
        + GuSTO asked about the use of the term “scholarships” in the draft language, rather than “tuition waiver,” as this differs from what the senator was told by his department. Maryam said this was the language provided by Graduate Council, and that this may be a difference of terminology within departments, but she would try to get clarification before the draft language is approved.
* Old Business
  + Elections: Representative-at-Large – There were no nominations for the open Representative-at-Large position. Julia asked the senators to inform their constituents of this opening and to contact her or Maryam if they know of anyone interested in serving in this capacity. The election remains open until the position is filled.
* New Business
  + Representative-at-Large Mallory Minter
    - Tobacco Free and Smoking Policy – The proposed changes to the Tobacco Free and Smoking Policy have been discussed at length in previous GAs. The Clean Air Committee has asked GSS to send them a position letter supporting the proposed policy change. Faculty Senate recently sent a position letter to the Clean Air Committee in favor of the policy change, but the vote in favor of the policy was very close. Undergraduate Student Government (USG) has issued no official statement on the policy change, but Mallory’s understanding is that body is generally not in favor of the proposed changes. Mallory is asking for an official vote on whether or not to support the policy change, so a position letter can be drafted and brought to GA for approval.
      * + HEADS commented that she has a constituent who wrote her a lengthy position statement opposing the proposed policy, and thinks the current policy would be adequate to address clean air concerns on campus if it were properly enforces. The constituent thinks it is unfair to stigmatize a relatively small percentage of the campus community for smoking when accommodations are made for other student populations of comparable size.
        + Theatre and Film said his constituents are also not happy with the proposed policy change, feeling it is too excessive and infringes on personal liberties. His constituents are also concerned about whether or not the policy would allow them to use tobacco paraphernalia as props in theatrical and film performances, which may limit their work as student artists.
        + Sociology Graduate Student Association expressed concern that this policy would unduly burden people who work for the university, or put students in a position of reporting violations against faculty and staff, who the senator does not think should be unjustly penalized. Maryam clarified that the classified staff also recently voted to show their support for the policy change, and that so far only the student government organizations have raised serious concerns.
        + Krystal asked whether the university is going to pay for things like nicotine patches or support groups for people who may wish to quit smoking if the policy goes into effect. Mallory said there was no play to pay for cessation services, but the university would be promoting education efforts to help people avoid tobacco products.
        + MPASA said he would rather see stricter enforcement of the current policy, and pointed out that tobacco use outside designated areas on campus still happens. He also said it seemed like all the new policy was advocating for was the removal of ashtrays on campus, which would lead to increased littering.
        + Criminal Justice asked for clarification on what the enforcement policy would be if the policy change goes into effect. Mallory said the primary goal is to educate people about tobacco use, rather than enforcement. The senator asked why the university is taking an either-or stance, and why there could not be education and still let people smoke who choose to do so. Mallory and Maryam said there were some state funding issues involved as well, as the Ohio Board of Regents has been pushing for all public universities in Ohio to adopt similar policies.
        + Philosophy said she felt this was more of an issue that exists on paper than a real issue. She also brought up the fact that when this issue was previously discussed in GA, marijuana usage on campus was a major point of contention, and since the marijuana legalization initiative on the November, 2015, ballot did not pass, she wondered why this policy was still being pushed. The senator felt instituting a policy like this might give the university a bad reputation.
        + Student Development Association and College Student Personnel reminded the senators that if the proposed policy changes go into effect it would cause any students – both graduate and undergraduate – who live in campus housing to leave their homes and go off campus to smoke, which the senators worried would be a safety concern for those students who smoke.
      * Oppose vs Support Vote – Julia announced that a card vote would be held to determine whether or not GSS would lend its support to the proposed policy changes. Jeffrey reminded the senators that only those people who have a direct conflict of interest with this issue should abstain from the vote. The result of the vote was five senators in favor of supporting the proposed policy changes, 38 senators opposed to supporting the proposed policy changes, and one senator abstaining from voting. As a result, SEC will work on drafting a position letter stating that GSS is opposed to the proposed changes to the university clean air policy. This letter will be presented for discussion and a vote of approval at the next GA.
* Issues and Concerns – No other issues or concerns were presented at GA.
* Announcements
  + **Next General Assembly:** December 4, 2015, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m., McFall Gallery; Guest(s): **Jamie Heineman**, Community of Care
  + **World Student Association International Dinner**, November 14, 6:00pm. See Vaughn Thornton for tickets.
  + **Troegs Brewery Beer Tasting**: November 19, 5:30 in BTSU 207.
  + **Black Swamp Pub Happy Hour:** Join us today after GA for drinks and/or dinner at Black Swamp Pub in the Union.
  + **BGSU Libraries has a page for graduate students:** <http://www.bgsu.edu/library/LTL/students/GraduateStudents.html>
  + **If your department or organization has an event**, email gradcol@bgsu.edu by 4 pm on the Thursday before the week of your event to have it included in the weekly Academic Agenda.
* Adjournment – Julia moved to adjourn the meeting. The “ayes” carried and the meeting was adjourned. Julia thanked everyone for coming and wished everyone a good weekend.