

Minutes:

I. Call to order

President Jack Leff called to order the second Fall 2021 Meeting of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate Meeting at 5:30pm on **September 9, 2021** at Owens Banquet Hall and on Zoom.

II. Sign-in

Senators in-person and on Zoom signed in via Google Forms.

III. Approval of agenda

Jack read this meeting's agenda. The agenda was passed.

IV. Old Business (see details below for vote counts, amendments, and debates)

a. GPSS Resolution 2021-22A

President Leff read the resolution to establish a university policy governing task forces and working groups and called for a vote. The vote passed.

b. GPSS Resolution 2021-22B

President Leff read the resolution to make 12-month graduate contracts the default contract and called for a vote. The vote passed.

c. GPSS Resolution 2021-22C

President Leff read the resolution to improve financial transparency and exercise oversight of the Virginia Tech Foundation and called for a vote. The vote passed.

d. GPSS Resolution 2021-22D1

President Leff read the resolution to expand ethical oversight of researching and developing policing and surveillance technologies and called for a vote. The vote passed.

e. GPSS Resolution 2021-22D2

President Leff read the resolution to broaden ethical oversight for anti-immigrant research projects and called for a vote. The vote passed.

f. GPSS Resolution 2021-22E

President Leff read the resolution to change the constitution to move the transition of power to spring and called for a vote. The vote passed.

g. GSBB Policy and Procedure

President Leff called for a vote on GSBB Policy and Procedure. The vote passed.

V. New Business

a. GPSS Resolution 2021-22F

President Leff read the resolution to raise the low wages of university staff and get ahead of the ball on state requirements. The motion to advance to a second reading passed.

b. GPSS Resolution 2021-22G

President Leff read the resolution to create a financial stimulus to support the Cultural and Community Centers. The motion to advance to a second reading passed.

c. GPSS Resolution 2021-22H

President Leff read the resolution to clarify and expand parental leave policies. The motion to advance to a second reading passed.

d. GPSS Resolution 2021-22I

President Leff read the resolution to establish Virginia Tech as a sanctuary campus. The motion to advance to a second reading passed.

e. GPSS Resolution 2021-22J

President Leff read the resolution to expand protections for international students. The motion to advance to a second reading passed.

New business for next week is on the [website](#).

VI. Adjournment

President Jack Leff adjourned the meeting.

Discussion Highlights + Submitted Commentary:

Vote Results:

A: 51 Yes; 8 No; 6 Abstain

B: 52 Yes; 7 No ; 6 Abstain

C: 56 Yes; 5 No ; 4 Abstain

D1: 45 Yes; 11 No ; 9 Abstain

D2: 48 Yes; 7 No ; 10 Abstain

E: 57 Yes; 2 No ; 6 Abstain

GSBB Bylaws: 58 Yes; 7 Abstain

Transparency statement: We had 63 voters, two of which were voting proxy for another member for a total of 65 votes in each category. I counted responses left blank as ‘Abstain’.

2021-22 A

Sen. Poling moved to strike the last paragraph on the grounds that a minority of stakeholders should not be permitted to walk away from a taskforce and impede progress. A majority should be required.

President Leff clarified that this language existed to balance the power disparities that often exist on task forces between majority membership and stakeholders brought in for community or specialty consultation.

The motion to strike failed.

2021-22 B

Sen. Madhavan Miller moved to amend the Resolution to clarify that students in programs that offer merit-based advancements would still be obligated to do so under the 12-month model. The motion to amend carried.

Sen. Murphy moved to amend the Resolution to protect the volume of students presently being integrated into programs. This resolution should clearly establish that departments should not be cutting program sizes to expand contract options.

The motion to amend carried.

Questions were asked and clarified by Director of Programs about how the impacts for this resolution as someone who is already on a 12-month contract. Director Palmersheim explained that this will allow students to allows students who already work 12-months to receive payment for all 12 or students can choose a 9-month contract if they prefer. Director Palmersheim also linked to the Cost of Living survey indicating that graduate students only had \$20 surplus income after necessary and basic costs were deducted.

Comments were made by international graduate students in support of this Resolution, as a 12-month, solidified contract would significantly alleviate many visa and immigration concerns that often occur when only 9-month contracts are available.

Sen. Malley comments that the philosophy department funds their students with optional work over the summer with minimal hours. This is a proposed model for this system.

2021-22 C

Sen. Murphy moved to strike the words “openly mocked” unless a direct citation could be provided for them.

Sen. Brown commented support as these words sound juvenile and are not substantially necessary.

Sen. Mbarushimana asked if Resolutions referred to in the 3rd paragraph can be cited.

President Leff clarified that he was referring to the time that the Board of Visitors laughed at high school stakeholders that were advocating for stronger climate policy.

Sen. Robertson argued that we need to be more specific by what we’re asking for when we would like to see a citation. Why does this need to be cited if it is a direct experience? What type of citation would satisfy the opposition? This is not a research paper. Our stories are important.

The Motion carried to Show Evidence, not Strike.

Sen. Poling commented that the portion on democratic oversight is likely to get laughed out of the room and not taken seriously.

Sen. Williams asked what the problem was with included democratic experts in decision making? And how or why that would get “laughed at”?

Sen. Ming requested that more communities should be involved in this process.

2021-22 D1 & D2

Sen. Poling commented that the IRB needs to be involved in the resolution somewhere.

Sen. Brown asked if President Leff could clarify the investigation conducted for these materials.

President Leff clarified that these Resolutions (and others) have had faculty-stakeholders and researchers examine the content of this document and provide supporting evidence. President Leff also clarified that Vice President Fox had also seen this document, and her previous policy work focused on ethical oversight for AI and robotics for the EU.

Vice President Fox expanded that this work was part of Project SIENNA. The findings report highlights the necessity of ethical guidelines and protocols and evaluation tools for research and innovation in AI & Robotics, including UAVs and Surveillance technologies. These guidelines impact universities, organizations, and policymakers alike and have been worked on with

Humanitarian organizations, top tier universities, and independent research firms across Europe. US is vastly behind in regulatory policy here.

Sen. Williams commented that many of the Senators have direct experience with the IRB and have witnessed the IRB making changes throughout the years. This Resolution highlights persistent coverage gaps within ethics and justice.

GSBB Bylaws:

Director of Finance Prasad moved to amend the bylaws to reduce the caucuses represented from 11 to 9 and to allow the GSBB to function without quorum until membership could be established. She notes this is because of the large amount of applications already received, and she did not wish to make these applicants wait even longer.

Sen. Navabpour queried where these folks will go to receive funds?

Director Prasad clarified that they can still apply to the GSBB. But these funds come from tuition paid by graduate students, not professional students. So, the removed caucuses do not pay into the system or utilize it often.

The motion to amend carried.

2021-22 F

No comments

2021-22 G

Sen. Poling commented that admissions should be consulted to align with how they are defining diversity and perhaps consider consulting with more of the diverse student groups on campus, such as the Appalachian Caucus.

Sen. Malley asked if we can specify the amount of funding needed by the CCCs

President Jack clarified that asking for a specific dollar amount that this time would be highly challenging as we do not have access to their funds or how they are being managed. We can suggest a range or a tier-bump, but until a task force is established to investigate this further, it must stay vague.

2021-22 H

No comments

2021-22 I

Sen. Murphy requested clarification on ‘sanctuary campuses’

President Jack clarified that this definition would permit VT to act as a safe haven for students that are undocumented or whose documentation has lapsed or become precarious due to US political shifts. Sanctuary campuses privilege the safety and well-being of their students over non-legal pressures to provide supplemental data to ICE or other reporting agencies. [One example of this is Dominican University’s Sanctuary Campus Covenant].

Sen. Swilley asked if we will be breaking the law by being a Sanctuary Campus.

President Jack, Vice President Fox, Director Burroughs, Sen. Platzer, Sen. Robinson, and Director Palmersheim clarified that we will be cooperating to the extent that the law demands, but no further. This is not breaking the law.

Sen. Williams commented that there is a distinct difference between passive compliance and active enforcement. And that we need to obey the law by using the law to protect at-risk individuals rather than abusing the law to extend the reach of ICE beyond what they are legally permitted without warrants, writs, or other documentation.

Sen. Malley commented that we need to ensure this information is widely distributed once established to ensure that undocumented students are able to access necessary health services, like the Women's Center, Cook Counseling, etc. And not so afraid of deportation that they neglect their personal health and safety.

President Leff, Vice President Fox confirmed support of this comment and have noted it.

Sen. Robertson commented that it is very intense to experience political precarity in this way as an international student -- citing similar concerns about status during presidential shifts.

Sen. Ming requested that the 'Be it resolved' section specifies 'companies in cooperation with ICE'.

Director. Palmersheim inquired if this status would impact international students in a situation similar to 2020 where visas were at risk of revocation?

President Leff clarified that yes, ideally. This would also benefit and aid these types of circumstances.

Sen. Malley inquired if this resolution extends to professors, noting that professors also faced these issues in 2020.

President Leff responded that no, it does not. But that we will ensure that the language is clarified so that it may do so -- as that is the general intent of the Resolution.

Sen. Williams commented that discussing the data harvesting aligns well with the aims of the previous revolution on anti-surveillance that could be more explicitly highlighted.

Director Palmersheim commented that the 12-month contract would also help to address this by bridging gaps in university employment.

2021-22 J

Sen. Navabpour questioned if GPSS had reached out to Cranwell.

President Leff clarified that yes, Cranwell was reached out to for comment as well as other International community stakeholders.

Sen. Navabpour responded that the president of Cranwell told her that he had not been directly contacted for comment. And that perhaps this could help in clarifying the protections in the 'therefore be it resolved'.

Sen. Murphy commented that the word 'white' is misspelled in part 3, Appendix 1.

Sen. Valop requested that Resolutions be specified on international students for J and undocumented students for I. This prevents conflation between international students and undocumented students.

Experience was shared on how the pandemic placed the student in a challenging position as their interview was delayed, and they were unable to come to VT.

Sen. Malley inquired if a separate bridge fund could be established to help prevent these types of financial issues.

