

GSA General Assembly Meeting #7

Zoom Edition
March 4th, 2021



@VTGSA

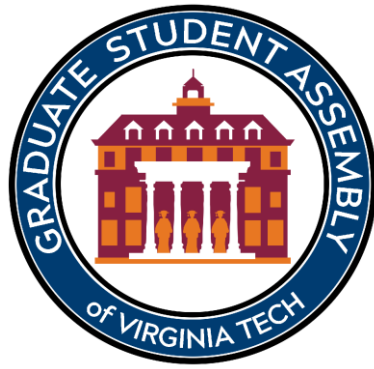


Graduate Student Assembly
of Virginia Tech



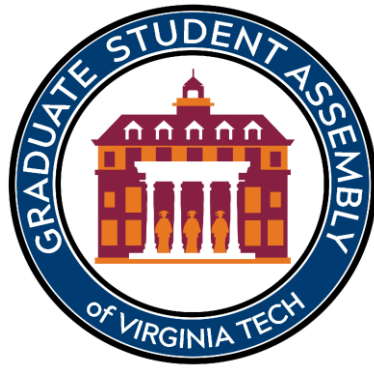
Gsa.vt.edu

This meeting is being recorded



Agenda:

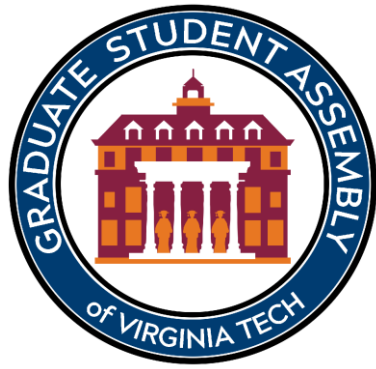
1. Quorum, approval of minutes & agenda
2. Agenda Items
 - a. '21-'22 Tuition/Fee Open Comments to BoV Finance Committee
 - b. Preliminary analysis of GSA Cost of Living Survey
 - c. Resolutions
 - i. CGPSP 2020-21C
 - ii. CGPSP 2020-21D
 - iii. CUSP 2020-21G
 - iv. CFA 2020-21E and F
3. Subcommittee Updates
4. Standing Committee Updates
 - a. Graduate Student Budget Board
 - i. Updates from CSA Reps
 - ii. Update from Finance Committee
 - b. Internal Affairs/Judicial
 - i. New Constitution Updates
 - ii. GSA Elections
5. **New Business**
 - a. GSA Resolutions
 - i. Election Day
 - ii. Comp. Fee Monthly payment plan date change
6. Exec. Board Updates
 - a. VP
 - b. Finance
 - c. Programs
 - d. Events
 - e. Communications
 - f. Graduate Rep. to BoV
7. Open Forum
8. Closing/Adjournment



GSA Agenda Items

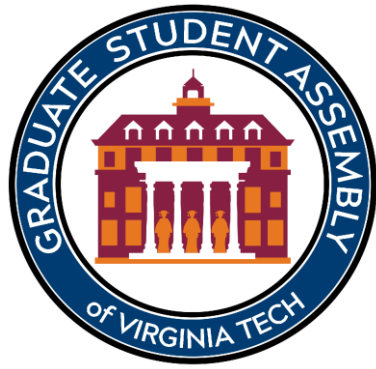
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- c. Resolutions

'21-'22 Tuition/Fee Open Comments to BoV Finance Committee on March 8th



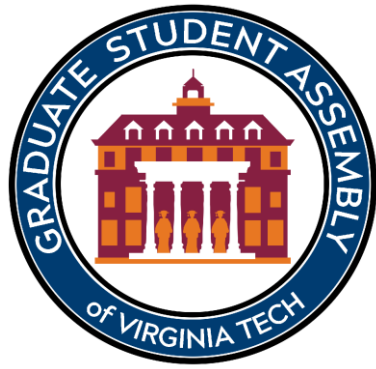
- On-campus graduate students: Tuition and E&G fees may increase between 0 percent and 2.9 percent.
- All students: Mandatory fees may increase up to \$90 to support mandated cost increases, including employee benefits and compensation, as well as enhancements in student health and counseling services.

'21-'22 Tuition/Fee Open Comments to BoV Finance Committee on March 8th

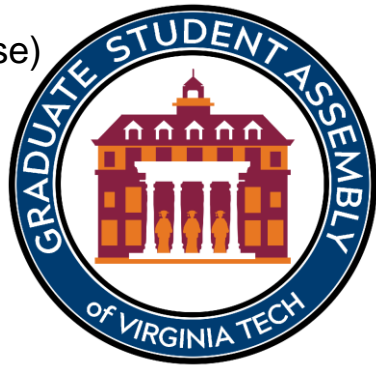


- Registration Deadline: Friday, March 5th (first come, first serve)
- Budget workshop starts at 1:15pm
- Currently only 4 students have submitted written comments
- https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2021/02/bov-tuition-fees-spring21.html?utm_source=cmpgn_news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=vtUnirelNewsDailyPublicCMP_021921-public

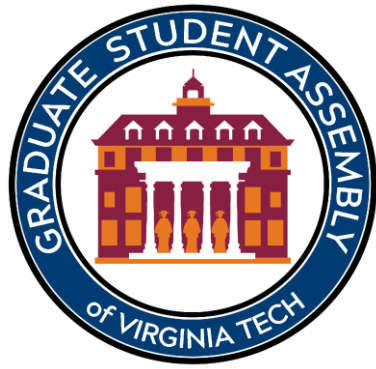
Preliminary analysis of GSA Cost of Living Survey



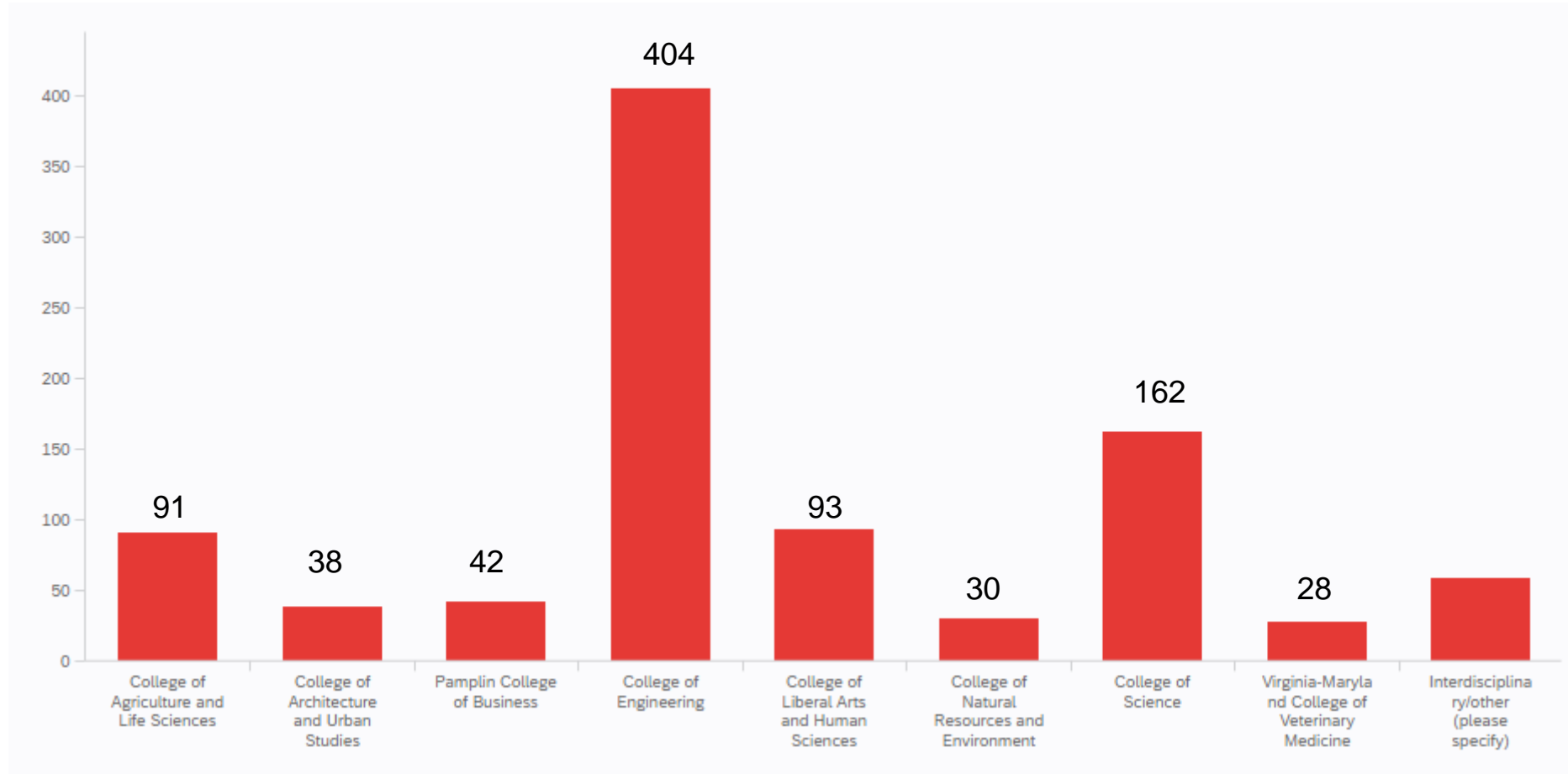
- Survey will be live by Feb 8th to March 12th
- Analyze cost of living for VT grad students across all campuses
 - Goal: 1000 responses
 - Analyzes monthly expenses
- Similar survey will be sent to graduate students at UVA, VCU, & GMU.



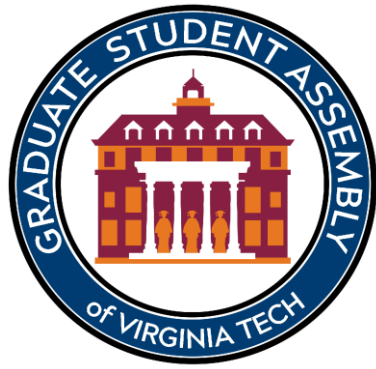
- 1) Demographics
 - a) Location (Blacksburg, Roanoke, DC, other)
 - b) International or Domestic
 - c) College Affiliation
- 2) Employment/Deductions
 - a) Assistantship status: GA, GTA, GRA, fellowship/scholarship, wage/salary, loan, other (specify)
 - b) Do you have a multi-year assistantship offer?
 - c) Annual stipend
 - d) Do you work an additional job (external to VT)? Hours worked (weekly)?
 - e) Tax deduction (monthly)
 - f) Comprehensive Fee Deduction
 - i) Pays at beginning of semester.
 - ii) Monthly
 - g) Education costs (textbooks, hardware/software upgrades, technology subscriptions, etc; estimate expenses per semester)
- 3) Housing/Utilities (Monthly)
 - a) Rent/Mortgage (per individual, only include amount you are responsible for)
 - b) Number of roommates (0 if living by yourself, do not include children)
 - c) Gas/Heat
 - d) Electric
 - e) Water
 - f) Cellphone
 - g) Internet
 - h) Childcare costs
 - i) Grocery budget
- 4) Transportation (monthly, unless indicated otherwise)
 - a) Parking (semester)
 - b) Gasoline
 - c) Insurance
 - d) Vehicle tax (annual)
 - e) Distance lived from work location (miles)
 - f) Commute time to work location (one-way)
- 5) Medical
 - a) Receive medical/dental insurance from VT
 - b) Monthly premium
 - c) Assuming coverage improves, what is the maximum you are willing to pay for better health care coverage? (monthly)
 - d) What additional coverage do you seek to be covered by student health insurance?
- 6) Select & rank the 3 issues of most concern to you where you believe the Graduate School should prioritize:
 - i) Stipend/funding
 - ii) Availability of classes
 - iii) Work/financial commitments outside school
 - iv) Program structure/requirements
 - v) Assistantship/workloads
 - vi) Family obligations
 - vii) Safety/security on campus
- 7) Please feel free to include topics related to expenses you have that we have not brought up in this survey/Discuss issues GSA should advocate



Responses by College



Preliminary analysis of GSA Cost of Living Survey



- 948 responses (March 4th)
- ~58% respondents do not have a multi-year assistantship offer
- \$827/mo. rent
- \$255/mo. tax
- \$228/mo. utilities (gas/heat/electric, water, internet, cell phone)
- \$367/mo. comp fee



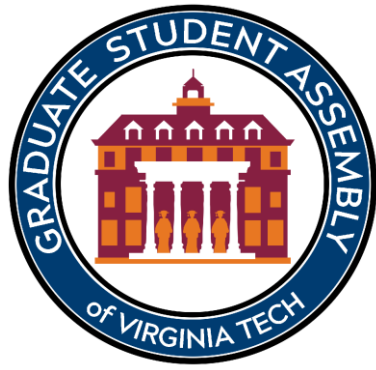
GSA Cost of Living Survey:

- Long-term plan for Health Insurance
 - Health insurance is negotiated/companies bid every few years
 - VT bid (Aetna) was 10+yrs ago
 - Upcoming bid is Fall 2021
 - Goal: partner with other VA universities to create a large base where everyone gets the same healthcare
 - Pretty much everyone showing interest except UVA (well established healthcare system/medical school)



Resolutions

- **CGPSP 2020-21C:** Discontinue Degree, Master of Science in Biomedical Technology Development and Management
- **CGPSP 2020-21D:** Discontinue Degrees, Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), in Career and Technical Education (EDCT)
- **CUSP 2020-21G:** Approve New Major, EUropean & Transatlantic Studies, in Bachelor of Arts in International Studies
- **CFA 2020-21E:** Amend Faculty Senate Operations Commission on Faculty Affairs
- **CFA 2020-21F:**

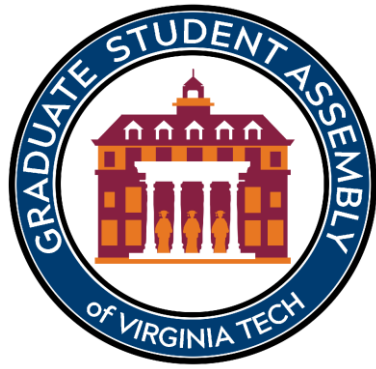


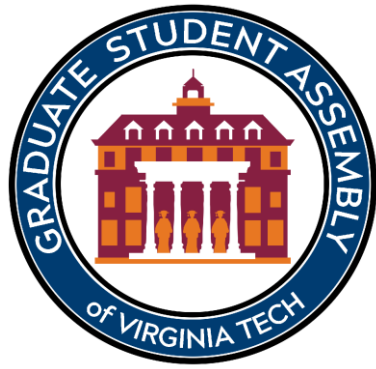
GSA Subcommittee Updates

a) Going Green

Going Green

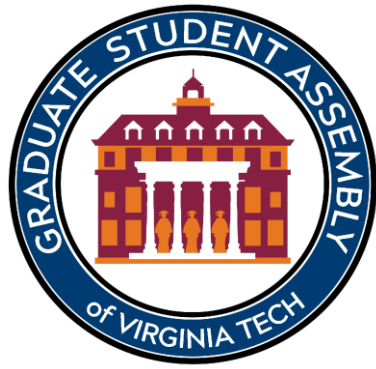
- Survey? Jack Leff





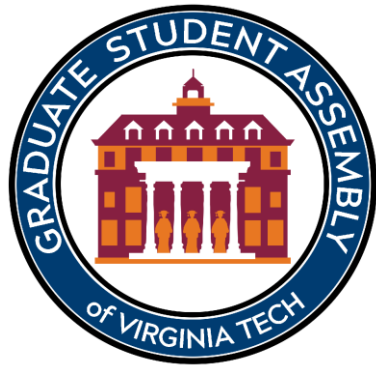
GSA Subcommittee Webpages

Reminder: Email Sharon Stidham
(sharon62@vt.edu) with progress/advocacy
efforts so everything can be published online.



Standing Committee Updates

Finance
Judicial



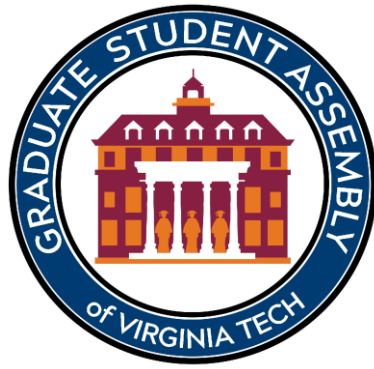
Finance



GSBB Update

- Pilot Phase-1: To begin Week-3, March 2021 until Aug 2021
- Operating Budget- \$50,000
- GSBB Policy and Procedure under Review by SECL and GSA Delegates
- Payment Processing and Reimbursement- Student Budget Board and GSA Finance committee will finalize before Pilot Phase begins

GSBB Update

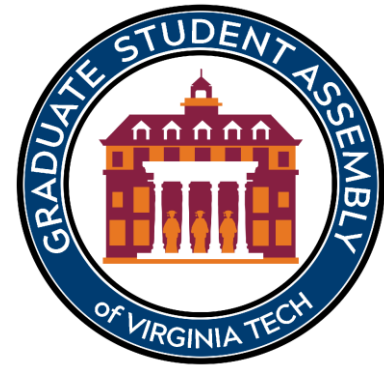


- Application Forms, training, & reimbursement processes currently under development



Judicial and Internal Affairs Committee

Constitution Update



GSA - GSS Constitution Revision

GSA Judicial and Internal Affairs Committee

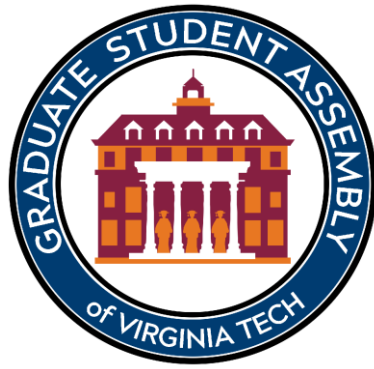




Problems with Old Constitution

1. Old Constitution is verbose, not accessible and does not reflect how GSA actually operates
2. The constitution contained too much information, especially procedural information that does not belong in a structural document
3. Workloads of some Executive board members are too high and imbalanced
4. There is no official link to Graduate Student Organizations at Remote Campuses
5. There is no established process to bring up issues to be addressed
6. There is little continuity year-to-year within the GSA
7. There is not a focus on how the Delegates could advocate effectively through the GSA, all the power is in the hands of the Executive Board

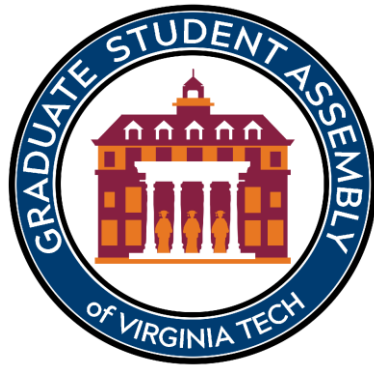
Bottom line: The Constitution should convey a clear purpose and structure. Ours did not.



Mission Statement of the Graduate Student Senate

The mission of the Graduate Student Senate is to serve as a voice for all graduate students through advocacy and community-building in a culture of inclusivity and support; ensure access to the resources necessary for scholarly and professional success; and foster a network of coalitions among all graduate students to help us achieve these goals.

1. **Advocacy** - Work with decision makers to address needs of the graduate student body.
2. **Community Building** - Host events to connect people, and to help with issue resolution.
3. **Scholarly and Professional Development** - Support through Events and Programs.
4. **Movement Building** - Guide graduate students in forming departmental structures for advocacy.



Committee's Goal in Constitution Revision

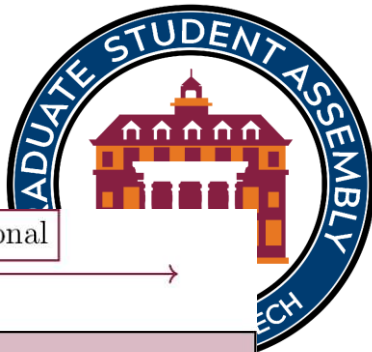
Overall Goal:

Clearly establish the high-level structure and functions of the GSS and write the founding documents such that they are accessible and facilitate student leadership.

Three Foundational Documents:

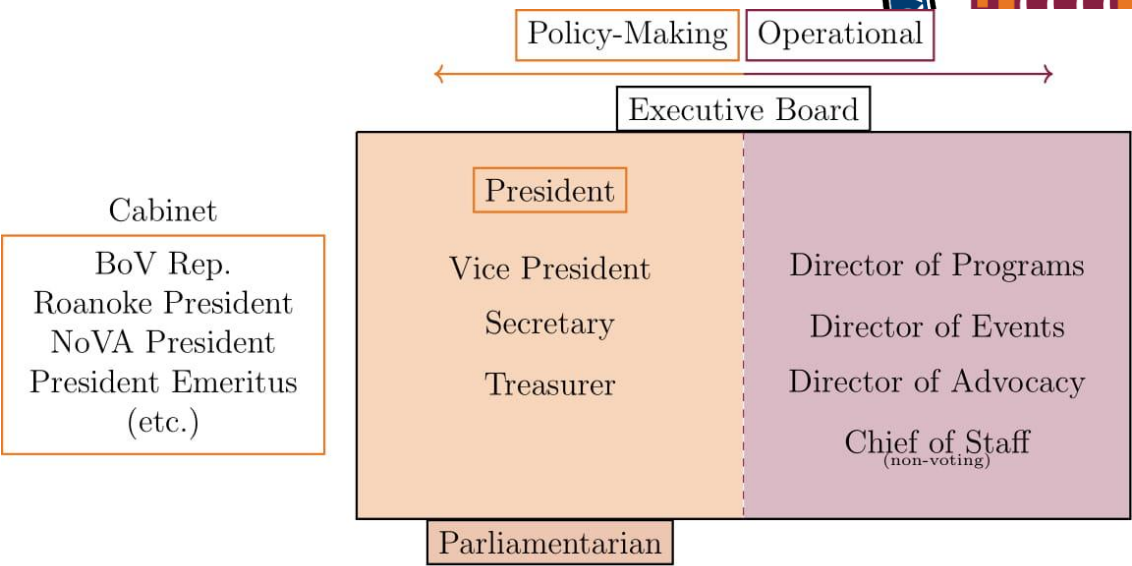
1. **Constitution:** Define the functions, structures, and processes central to the mission of the GSS.
2. **Bylaws:** Codify critical operations, guidelines, and procedures for how GSS functions.
3. **Handbook:** Memorialize current normative practices, recommendations, and guidance for all members.

Constitutional Structure of Graduate Student Senate

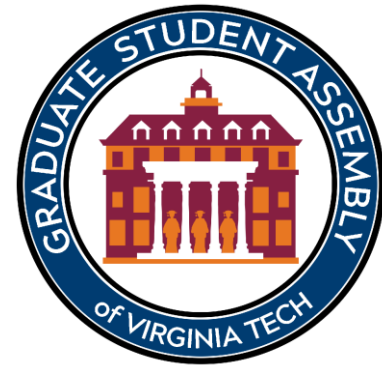


Parts of GSS Structure

- 1. **Senate:** Two Senators representing students in each Department/Program, organized into College Based Caucuses
- 2. **Executive Board:** Two new positions: Chief of Staff, and Director of Advocacy
- 3. **Cabinet:** BOV Rep, Presidents of Remote Campus GSS, President Emeritus, and other Graduate Student other leaders to advise the President



Senate		
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)



Desired Changes and Actions Taken

Desired Change:

Focus on advocating for graduate students both on the “local” level (facilitating the formation of departmental graduate groups) and the “institutional” level (identifying key issues affecting all graduate students for GSS to bring to the attention of the rest of Shared Governance)

Actions:

1. Created the Director of Advocacy Executive Board Position who will facilitate formation of departmental and program-level graduate groups.
2. Organize Senators from departments into Caucuses by College to form a common identity and enable advocacy around common issues.

Senate		
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)



Desired Changes and Actions Taken

Desired Change:

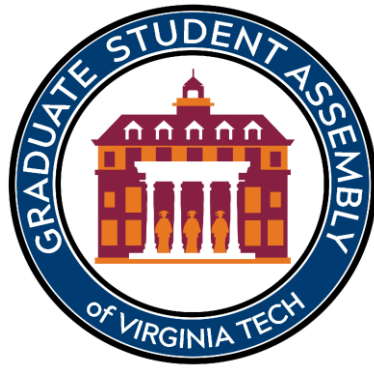
Clarify the legislative roles and powers available to GSS Senators.

Actions:

Define three types of committees of Senators that can be formed within GSS.

1. **Standing Committees:** Always present in the GSS, these deal with issues essential to the operation of GSS (e.g. Finance Committee, Internal Affairs Committee, Commissions Committee etc.)
2. **Policy Committees:** Temporary committees convened to investigate and discuss a particular policy or issue.
3. **Operational Committees:** Temporary Committees convened to plan, organize, and carry out GSS events or projects.

Guidelines for how to use legislative powers will be laid out in the handbook, including writing resolutions.



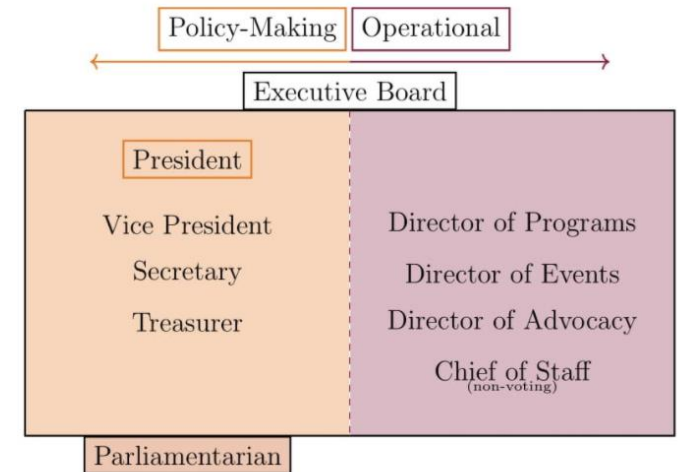
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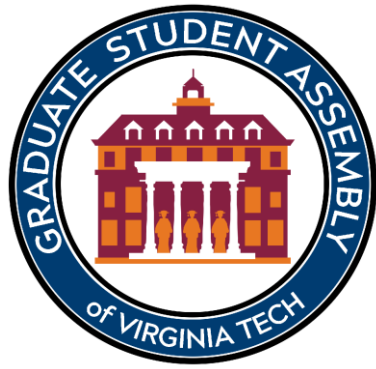
Desired Change:

Clarify the roles of the Executive Board and reduce the overall workload of these student leaders.

Actions:

1. Separated Executive Board positions into Policy Making and Operational Positions.
2. Establish the Chief of Staff position, who will perform a majority of the administrative work needed to ensure effective internal operation of the GSS.
3. The Parliamentarian is appointed by the President as a expert on rules and procedures





Desired Changes and Actions Taken

Desired Change:

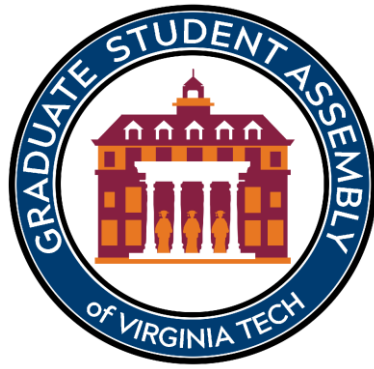
Unite the voices of the foremost graduate student leaders from through the Virginia Tech community, especially those of students at remote campuses that are often overlooked.

Actions:

1. Establish the President's Cabinet. The Cabinet ensures the voices of all graduate students are heard, and provides these leaders the opportunity to unite their efforts on particular issues affecting all graduate students.
2. President Emeritus position is held by a former President or Vice President who is retained to offer advice and guidance.
3. Additional Members can be added by the President.

Cabinet

BoV Rep.
Roanoke President
NoVA President
President Emeritus
(etc.)



Desired Changes and Actions Taken

Desired Change:

Maintain institutional memory within the GSS, maintaining momentum in advocacy activity from year to year.

Actions:

1. Recording norms and best practices of student governance at VT in a Handbook
2. Establish the position of President Emeritus
3. Change the date of elections from the end of the Spring Semester the end of the Fall Semester. This
 - a. Staggers the terms of the President and BOV rep
 - b. Allows elected members to learn their roles while there is still momentum of already begun GSS activities
 - c. Results in experienced leaders during the summer semester when, historically, few initiatives have begun.

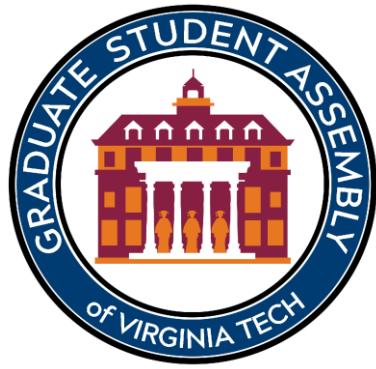


Summary of Benefits from the New Structure

1. The Director of Advocacy and new organization in the Senate emphasizes the role that Senators have in representing graduate students in their departments, advocating on their behalf.
2. Formation of Caucuses and Committees provides a structure of support within GSS for Senators to communicate effectively, discuss issues, and compose resolutions.
3. Clarifying and organizing the Policy-Making and Operational roles on the Executive Board allows for each member to operate more effectively.
4. Establish the President's Cabinet to ensure all graduate students are represented.
5. Changes to some positions and procedures will preserve institutional memory within GSS, enabling GSS to maintain multi-year initiatives and to learn from past successes how best to work for the benefit of all graduate and professional students at VT.

This encourages all graduate students to participate in student governance, and makes it more accessible.

Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs



Purpose:

Legislative body that is a part of the new Shared Governance Structure at VT that has equal power to write resolutions and define policy as all other commissions. It's charge is to identify, examine, and legislate on all issues related to graduate students. It is subject to oversight by GSS and GSS defines its membership.

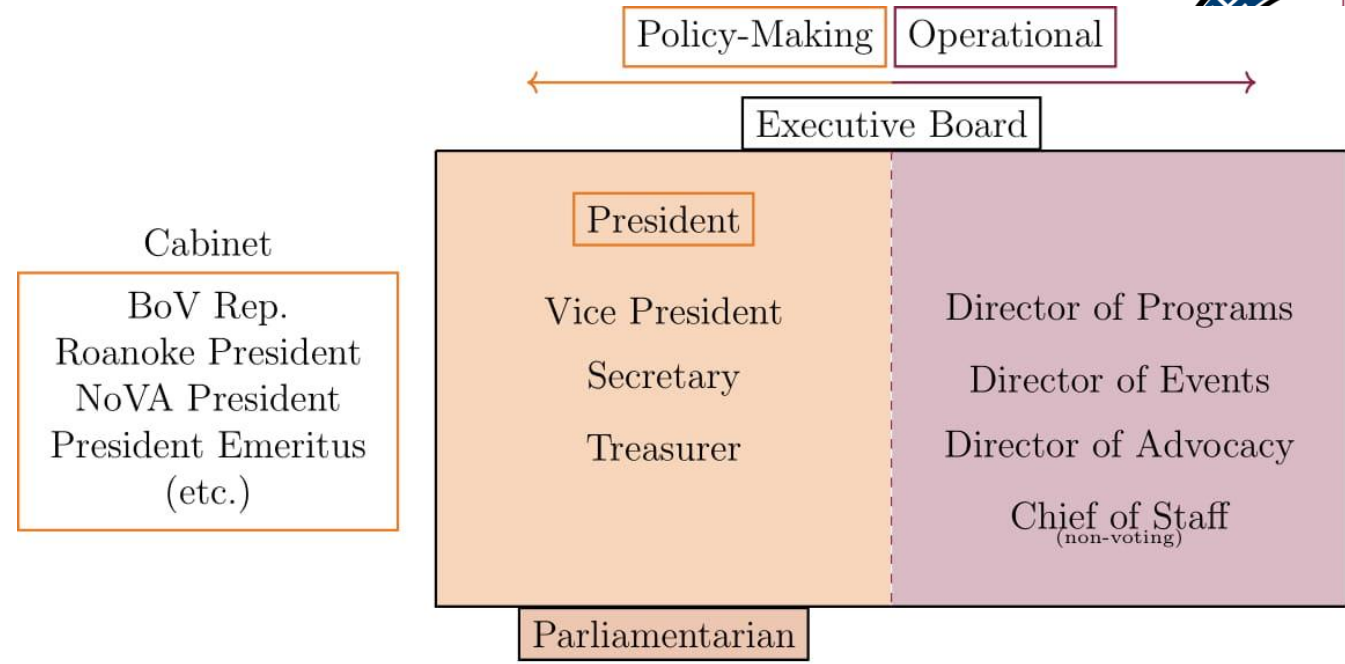
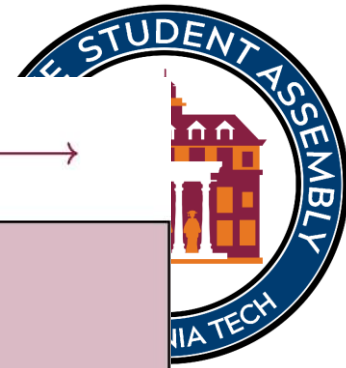
Proposed Membership:

1. Co-Chaired by the President of GSS and the Dean of the Graduate School.
2. A representative from each College Based Caucus
3. The Dean of each College
4. A faculty member from each College
5. VP of Student Affairs, VP of Roanoke Campus, Associate Dean from NOVA
6. Representative from the Budget Office



Things to be Addressed in the Bylaws

1. Appointing additional Senators, such as senators from non-departmental groups and Senators-at-large if needed
2. Exact Structure and responsibility of College Based Caucuses
3. Legislative Procedures - writing and voting on resolutions and bills
4. Establish standing committees
5. All other details....



Questions?

Senate		
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)
(caucus)	(caucus)	(caucus)
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Name Options

1. Graduate and Professional Student Senate
2. Graduate and Professional Senate
3. Senate for Graduate and Professional Students
4. Professional Graduate Senate

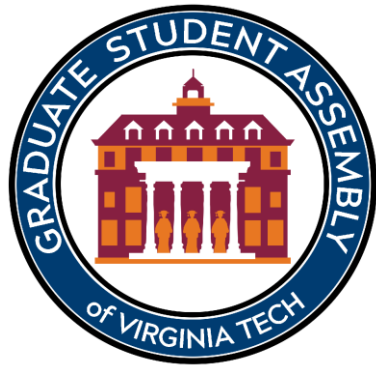


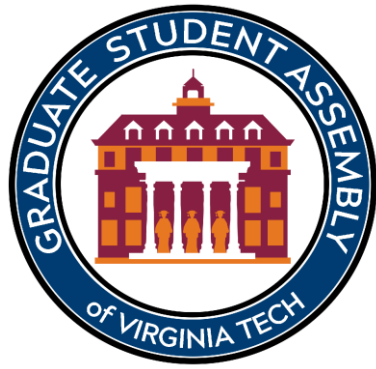


Election Plans

Committee on Judicial and Internal Affairs

Disclaimer

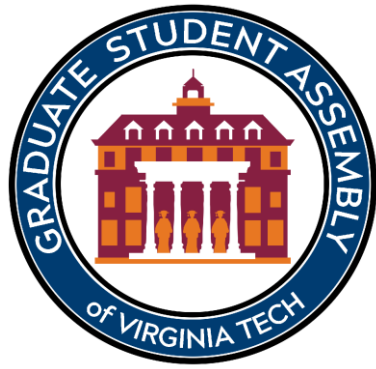




Disclaimer

The terms for the elected positions will:

- Follow the current constitution, and
- End on the last day of the Fall semester

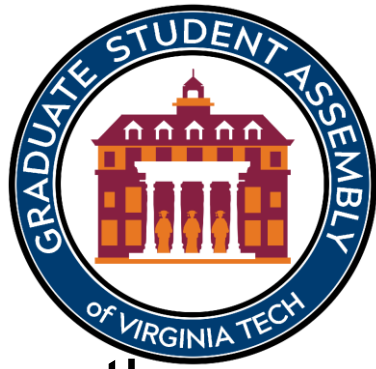


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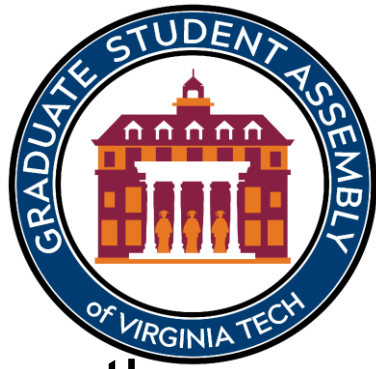
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Elections will be held again in November / December for positions in the new proposed constitution



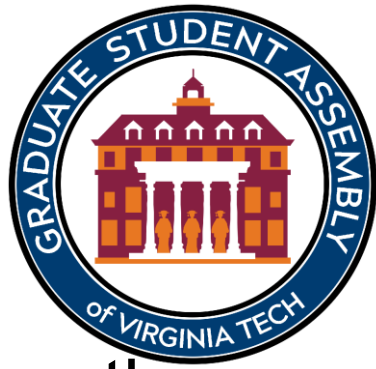
Steps:

- Step 0: Assembly vote to confirm my (Aidan's) nomination as the coordinator of the election



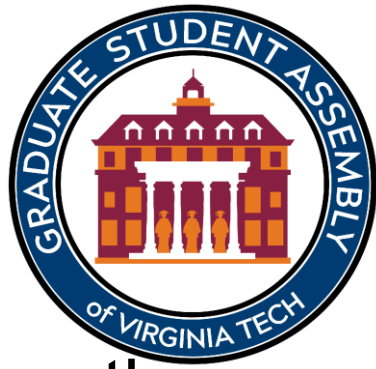
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- Step 1: Hold interest meetings and collect self-nominations for positions
 - Interest meeting: possible candidates and current position holders, Date: **TBD**



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 - ****Self-nomination deadline date: March 17****
 - Assembly receives list of candidates by **March 18**



Steps:

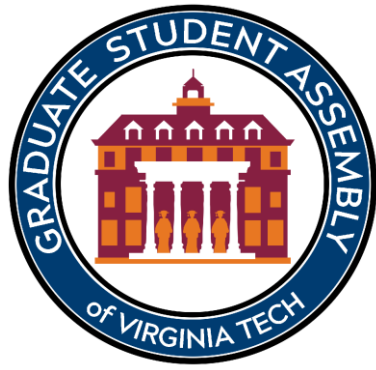
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 - Assembly receives list of candidates by **March 18**
- Step 2: Meet candidates and election day
 - "Meet the candidates" meeting, Date: **TBD**



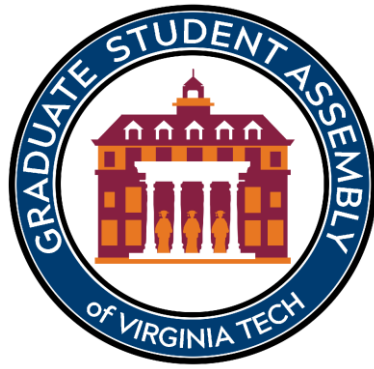
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 - Assembly receives list of candidates by **March 18**
- Step 2: Meet candidates and election day
 - "Meet the candidates" meeting, Date: **TBD**
 - Election day date: **April 22**
 - Candidates get time to speak
 - †Discussion occurs
 - †Voting occurs

†(will occur with candidates removed from main meeting room)



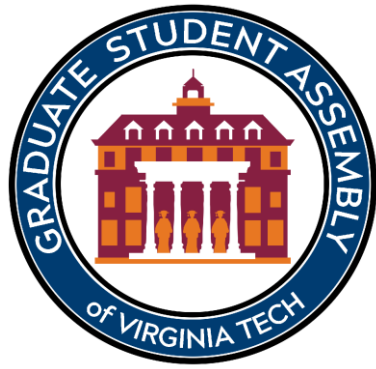
Questions?



New Business

How does shared governance at VT really work?

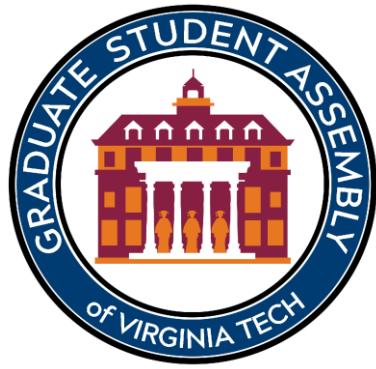
How can students really influence change?



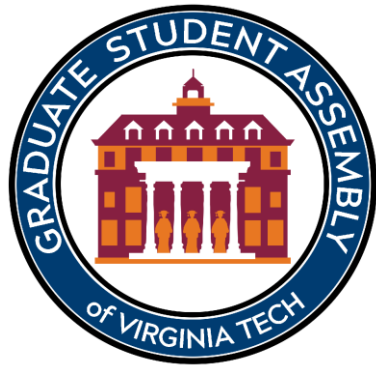
Resolution: Election Day

- GSA 2020-21-2R
- Election Day: the Tuesday following the first Monday in November is designated as Election Day in the United States; and that the Graduate Student Assembly hereby requests Virginia Tech designate Election Day as a University holiday for students
- Already has verbal buy-in and commitments from undergraduate & faculty leadership

Resolution: Comp. Fee Monthly payment plan date change



- No official resolution now; sent via email soon
- Ben Beiter



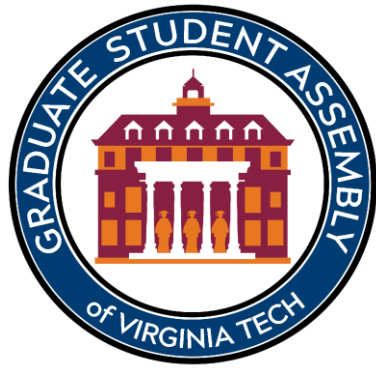
GSA Executive Board Updates



Dean Graduate Education Search

- Currently in progress
- Asking for “closed door session” with finalists and grad students
 - 1-grad student per college attend 4 sessions, standard set of questions
 - Roanoke + DC GSA President
- Everyone should attend the open forum sessions with finalists

Open Forum



Closing/Adjournment

