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GSAVT-General Assembly-(Zoom)
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Graduate Student Assembly - Virginia Tech

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>> MARUF HOQUE: Good afternoon, everyone. Are we at quorum? And is our captioner here?

>> Yes, captioner is here. If you have not turned on your subtitle, please do so.

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: And regarding quorum, we don't have a quorum. So we have to wait a little bit.

>> MARUF HOQUE: I propose open forum for those on the call. Our concern exists and this is your time. Or is everyone happy to be at the last assembly meeting?

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: We're at quorum, but there's a question, Jessica. If you can elaborate on that. Student at our department is having trouble and wanted to use the fund for transcription purposes for the dissertation. But there's issues having to go through different University approved service and problems with that. And status, also health information and further restrictions and services he could use. So I just need to share. He provided me a really detailed email that hopefully I can share with someone on the Board who might have insights.

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: Yes, so I just put the GSA email. And if there's details, I think they can provide that definitely.

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: You're on mute, Maruf.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Is this better for the captions?

>> SHARON FLYNN STIDHAM: It seems to be we're getting the full name on there, and Cindy has all your full names.

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: Tile turn the PowerPoint auto captioner off. All right.

>> MARUF HOQUE: All right. I'm sorry, I didn't pay attention to the prior question. But I assume it was answered? Are there other questions before we close this portion of the open forum? And we do have time at the end for open forum. Are all right, good reminder. So for the \$69 for the transportation fee and approved by the Board of visitors a month or so ago, I guess.

All righty. We have quorum. Do we have motion to approve the minutes from last meeting?

>> Move.

>> Is there a second?

>> Yes.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Great. Motion to approve the agenda as you see on the screen?

>> So moved.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Is there a second?

>> Yes.

>> MARUF HOQUE: All right, let's begin. We'll go straight into exec board updates. Starting off with first congratulations to Phil Miskovic who has been selected the 2021-2022 graduate rep for BoV. Phil, are you on the call? You usually show up.

>> I am, thank you. I'm actually driving right now, so I'm not being very safe. But, yeah, I look forward to all to serving the graduate student body starting in July.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Thank you. All right. With that, we'll let Phil drive and won't bother him. But, Awad.

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: Okay, so. Just honestly, the closing up updates, I just wanted to show the numbers basically of what we did when it comes to legislature and the roles of the Vice President here. But we had an average attendee of 50. I think this was phenomenal for like a year that was very, very different than, you know, beating us up all along. So I really appreciate that from everyone. 74 different delegates out of 102 who are registered with the GSA who showed up for the meeting. Fantastic turnout. And we also have remote campuses and we have interest groups and what not. I think that can get better. I think the programs that, you know, have delegates who do show up to the GSA with him see in the next slide, not now, but there's definitely more programs and getting involved. So I think the incoming GSA board, it's fantastic we have, as director of advocacy candidacy to get that going. I think that's going to be very important. When it comes to shared governance, I think this year was one, if not many years where we have all the seats absolutely filled throughout the year. So that was great. Graduate students were represented. And all commissions and committees and counsels, 20 of those seats were filled outside of the executive board which is something we really want to do change this year given that executive Board members do have a lot of seats they have to take by the virtual of the rules, but then they also end up taking more just because they want to fill out the seats. So it was fantastic to have the turnout that we had. People filling the seats and making sure grad students had voices everywhere. And I just want to do recognize this and put the slide up to show there's literally maybe 6 or 7 of us who speak at those executive Board meetings every month. But everything has been done if there's been great things that were done to the graduate community this year through the GSA. And thanks to everyone at executive, I think everyone has been phenomenal. But there's couple of dozen people who have participated in this. People in committees and subcommittees and what not. So this slide is just to thank all for participating. Because that's how we keep things going.

If you can go to the next slide, Maruf. Just to breakdown the delegates kind of attendance by department. And this is only for the 8 previous meetings. Missing one actually because they did not have any sign in for that. So, when we have 12 attendants, that means both delegates attended one meeting or more in a sense. And this will be passed on to the next executive. And it's obvious we have a lot of representation from some programs. People show up. Yet, math is representing. [Laughter] And from my role with the program at the GSA last year, I can tell those programs that have representation and those showing up, those are the people disseminating the information to their constituents. Those are the same programs that benefit the most from the GSA. Those are academic service provided of mind and so showing up to the meeting has benefits. Thank you again for showing up and contributing to this and I'll pass it on to the next.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Thank you. And thank you, Awad, for all your thoughts and arguments and everything we had throughout the entire year.

June.

>> JUNE ANN JONES: Hi, everywhere. So, this is a reminder and a brief for the upcoming event. So for sure, we are on, I put the RSVP link in the chat in case you haven't done that yet. Remember, this is a GSA event where we're going to have a recognition ceremony for people who have gone above and beyond for GSA programs and advocacy committees and things this year. So, make sure that you sign up to come to that. Of course, only if you're comfortable. So let's see. I'm getting my second dose of the vaccine. So I will be, you know, on stoppable and, hopefully, rest of you are able to come too in person. Reception ceremony is going to start at 4. But event is from 2 to 5. There's a lot of door price prizes, including gift down to downtown blacks Burke and some baskets from the glade road growing and ice cream coupon from sugar Magnolia. And then everybody who comes and gets one free drink on us. And then also, there's special treat again for GSA delegates. You're going to be getting a free meal. And we're going to give you that ticket when you arrive. Everybody is RSVPing for themselves, but we ask that you carpool with people or take a bike. There's actually a map on the event page that shows you that the Huckleberry Trail actually can take you from campus all the way to the farm, which might be good to get a little exercise. And finally see what the heck the Huckleberry Trail is. It's really cool. And I think Sabrina and Awad are going to be racing each other. So maybe one of you can beat them there too. Just one of them. What else is up here? Okay. So there's options also if you don't want alcoholic beverage, there's nonalcoholic beverages listed there. And water is available and vegetarian options. And for those celebrating Ramadan that are not able to partake, you can take your free meal home with you. And also people are welcome to run around on the farm. But of course, remember it is a farm, so please don't wear flip-flops and be careful. I think dogs are welcome. So you're welcome to bring your dog with you. Just make sure they're on a leash and you bring like a water bowl for them.

And let's see. Oh yeah. Just remember this is also a ticketed event. So all of your stipulates, you need to emphasize that they can't show up at the event. You need to be preregistered and confirmed. Which means Dryden who is our GA is making sure everybody filled out and acknowledge the things on our RSVP link and once you're confirmed by Dryden or me, then you can come to the event. It's limited attended events. Because of COVID, and also because we can't have 4,000 graduate students at the same location either. So this is like a once in a lifetime GSA-type of event. We made the best of what we had this year. And we would really like to see people there. Okay. Next slide. Slide, please.

Okay. I wanted to remind everybody we still are our buy Blacksburg initiative. This is what I wrote in this day last year, I rode in on this train. Buy Blacksburg's, by local, zero waste, all of that. So it turns out that all three of our partners are actually willing to continue this program into next year and I'm willing to help continue coordinating this. So remember that you can get discounts at all three of these vendors. And if you get that little sticker that we have in like Monika Gibson's office or grad school, you're able to pull your ID out with the sticker and then get these discounts at the stores. I would appreciate if people gave me feedback if you have tried to use these and if you went. If you used them at all or had any experiences related to this. Just let me know. DM means direct message. I learned that this year. Okay. One more slide.

Yeah, we'll bring stickers to the farm. And we also are going to have things like totes we got for the graduate, little hand-me-downs. So people will get those too. So this slide look very different, Maruf. It was very artistic before. [Laughter] Here's the content. Okay. So, since this is like my last meeting with you all as director of events, I wanted to kind of give you a little bit of information, kind of like how Awad was helpful explaining what's going on from his perspective. So from my perspective, there's a few things that I would like everyone to know about. So, as the director of events, it's tough to get all of our constituents on the same page. And also it's tough when we have to rely on chains of emails to get forwarded. So I would actually recommend that during orientation next year, we create a GSA ListServ. And solicit people to voluntarily give us their email addresses so we can directly email the graduate students. Even though delegates can still forward emails and information from us, if we're able to directly email people, it's a lot faster and also puts lot less pressure on delegates to be fast about forwarding information. So, I would suggest doing that.

The graduate and professional school fair takes a lot of work and we coordinate with a lot of administrators. We found out that the virtual platform this year was actually very costly. And it cost us. So it was not as big of a money maker as it has been in the past years when it's been in person. And it also led to there being schools that were presenting that didn't each see any students come into the virtual rooms, which you can imagine is a big let down. So I would recommend putting this in-person for this next year. But also that we push a little bit more to get professors onboard with trying to get their undergraduate students to attend this event to make this successful for years to come.

Little Hokie hand me down was awesome. We had so many donations this year. We filled up that Rec room in the graduate school. And it was amazing. But, there was so much stuff leftover and it was sad, because I know there's a lot of people on campus that could have used those things and it was very convenient they could have come and gotten them and COVID, you know, this year has kind of been crazy because of COVID. But I would also recommend that we strategize early about making sure that a lot of

people know about the event, but also that we invite people maybe like adjunct faculty and staff members who are our partners at the University who are also potentially needing free children and baby supplies that we should invite. And they can also help us by reducing amount of things left at the end of the event, which would be needed to get on to a truck and taken somewhere else. So I think that could help. And also, again, build our bond with other people, kind of that are at the University.

And, finally, the last thing I'll remind you of, the spring social is coming up. Please RSVP. And, yes, that it's not a problem and it's a reminder. You notice how I'm reading my slide. Please come and RSVP. I've been honored to be your director of events this year and I'm heavy happy to hand the torch to somebody else now. It's been a lot of planning. A lot of fun. A lot of making connections across the University. And, yeah. Thank you for having me. And I can't wait to see everybody at the farm in couple of weeks, and feel free to email me if you want to help, but also if you just have questions.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Thank you, again, June, and all of your work is well appreciated. All of your commitments that you've done over the past year. Well, before I go on here, I know Martina had an update in the chat for programs. And I she's having Internet issues. So I'll just read it from the chat. Program updates from Martina. The spring TFP cycle is open. The cap and gown program closes tomorrow. And the GRDP spring 2021 closes tomorrow as well. She's been answering emails that she -- she's been answering the emails she receives at the related accounts. So, I think she'll continue answering that until the end of the deadline. And also, Martina, thank you, again, for all of the work you have done this past year.

Sharon is the last exec member. I'll give you a minute for the update or so?

>> SHARON FLYNN STIDHAM: Quick update. For whoever is taking over after me, yay! I hand to you a website that was completely utterly redesigned are from previous years. We went with a very professional look. And I just wanted to say that I've been very honored to work with this group for the last year. In some cases, two and a half years. And thank you!

>> MARUF HOQUE: Thank you, Sharon. And same to you as well. Thank you for all the work you've done for the past two and a half years, especially, the past year. All right. Moving on to agenda items. I'll pass it on to Awad. Because I think you know what this resolution is.

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: Yes, so, again, another new major established and this was sent out to the delegates yesterday. So I'll just be receiving comments on it as well as, too, we received two other resolutions, Maruf?

>> MARUF HOQUE: From CUSP.

>> AWAD ABDELHALIM: There's couple of news resolution and you none of them is related to graduate student. There's one from CUSP but you'll receive those later on and we'll have those in ten days or so once the people get time to see if there's any comments or not. But this is just like an outstanding one we're not going to be voting on now.

>> MARUF HOQUE: All righty. Thank you. Of course, all commentary forwarded to the GSA email and appropriate channels. All right.

Now to our cost of living survey. I'm going to pass this on to Dryden, who has done a phenomenal job with the analysis and correlating graphs and things like that. So I pass it to you.

>> DRYDEN EPSTEIN: Thanks, Maruf. Yeah, so Maruf, Sabrina and I have been working on analyzing this data from the cost of living survey that we sent out couple of months back. So, we've got this fun pie chart that's sort of, it's a monthly breakdown of the average student. So that's across all campuses, because we got responses from students in Blacksburg, D.C., and we basically broke it down into these 5 different categories.

One of which we call just like basic cost of living. Which are just sort of like the very standard things as far as we know. Like everybody, everybody is going to be paying these things or these things are going to be coming out of their paychecks. That's tax deduction, rent or mortgage payment, gas/heat, electricity, water, phone, Internet bills. So all of those. And so for the average student, average graduate student of Virginia Tech, that's a huge chunk of their monthly cost. Over \$1,300. 66%. And then transportation cost, so that included parking cost, commuting, car insurance, and property tax payments for any cars owned. And you know, obviously, much smaller chunk of the pie, we had grocery cost around \$200 a month almost 10%. And health insurance premium, we ask questions about other health insurance cost, but we decided to just include the health insurance premium in this. And the comprehensive fee, which for many are students specifically Blacksburg students, it's a big chunk of money that they have to pay per month for the comprehensive fee just to be a graduate student at Virginia Tech so, that monthly average came out to little over \$2,000. And as we all know, many of us have, you know, assistantship positions, that's, you know, pretty close to what a lot of people are making per month in their stipend. So that's kind of why we wanted to do this. Here, we can go be to the next slide.

So we're going to be putting together a report that should be out in a few weeks. But just in general information about the survey, just to remind you guys. We've got over 1100 responses from graduate students. It was completed by students across all

tech campuses. So like I said, Blacksburg, roan oak, the D.C. region and we collected data for 5 weeks from February 5 to March 13. And so the final report in addition to what I went over in the last slide, the final report is also going to include cost related to childcare, which we know like some graduate students have children and families they're supporting. And that's a legitimate thing they need to be able to support their families and their children with the money they're making.

Out of pocket healthcare cost, so beyond the premium. Other desired coverage for students healthcare. Commuting time and distance to and from school and work. Educational cost outside of tuition and the comprehensive fee. And then information about stipend averages across colleges and graduate programs, because there is like a pretty large discrepancy that we notice across different graduate programs. And I think Maruf wanted to add couple of things as well.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Sure, our goal is to really finish this entire thing in the next two weeks or so. I think, I thought this would have been an easier task. But seeing the density of the data took us back and we definitely appreciate the challenge the entire graduate community has given us for this entire project. Additionally, cost of living will also be subdivided as employed by where we live. So Blacksburg, Roneburg, and D.C. And we'll try to have one big report for subsection of each city and what life is like in each place.

But thank you, again, to each, I mean, all of you for spreading the message on this and the entire graduate community for responding to this survey. All right.

Let me take a question from Courtney. Because I think that was directed everywhere. And I see Tommy has a question too. So, let me go for Courtney's question first because I read it first. It was, so, her question is how large in dollars was the difference in stipends across programs and departments?

I mean, it's pretty reflective, I think, of the stipend table that's published. You know, we received this stipend information from the data manager person at the graduate school. And so, it goes from as low, don't quote me on numbers right now. But I think the lowest one I saw was like 1500 a month and highest is well over 3,000 a month. And so that's kind of the span that we're noticing right now. I think to hit on another point, another question on our survey, we did ask if you're offered a multi-year assistantship or not, and I think I said this in some earlier report. 60% of the students do not have a multi-year offer so that's something else to look at in addition to all of this. So we will definitely have like a recommendation for compensation advocacy portion to our survey. Or excuse me, to our report on our survey.

And to Tommy's question for the \$1,300 for cost of living. Is there a number of roommates or something like that taken into account? Is this high even with utilities

taken into account? No, that's a reasonable question. We did ask roommates. I think we can put in, I think we can put in something that shows how many students live within roommates to reduce the cost, because that's how we asked the question. But it's definitely not clear all of that. I mean, all of that, I don't think we can fully uncover. So Micki's question.

>> DRYDEN EPSTEIN: So we did ask, we tried to be very specific about asking what is your portion of the rent or mortgage, right? As opposed to like, using myself as an example. I live in a house with two other roommates. I didn't answer the entire house total rent. Because the question asked, what is my portion of the rent or mortgage? So we're hoping that is how most students understood the question and answered the question. But we did ask specific questions like Maruf said. Do you live with roommates to reduce the cost of living for yourself? And a lot of people answered yes.

>> MARUF HOQUE: To Micki's question, are these stipend pre or post tax amounts? And stipend information is from the graduate school itself. So that is pretax.

>> DRYDEN EPSTEIN: And we also asked about tax, like the tax deduction so that, you know, we were asking for pretax stipend in the survey as well as what is your tax deduction?

>> MARUF HOQUE: Yeah. All right. Any other questions on this? And we promised to have a full report out hopefully in the next two weeks. All right. And of course, I kept this slide on for some time. Also, subcommittees, please send things over to Sharon before she's done so we can update the website before the new person comes in. With that, standing committee updates. So I'll toss it over to Ben Beiter.

>> So I updated the Constitution efforts. So after the last GSA meeting, we had voting by GSA and to approve the Constitution. And since then, it's been sent to the commissions and shared governance who has to approve it and been going through that process. And I think we'll be voted on University council either end of this month or beginning of next. And then not sure whether it has to go to the President or BoV? I don't know what the top level approval is. But hopefully that should happen in the summer. So I think the overall timeline is, it should be approved before the beginning of next semester. So, to that end, we are, the committee is looking at actual implementation of the Constitution. And so we started writing the by-laws and so here on the slide, I just shared some of the things we're looking at. The by-laws, govern the procedural parts of how GSA works and a lot of rules and policies we follow. And so rethinking some of the structures. This is just some of the examples of defining who sends the delegates, the structure of caucuses, exactly what standing committees we want to have and what they do. All the way down to things like setting exactly how we

measure quorum for our meetings. And so, we're still talking about all of these. If you feel very interested in this stuff, then feel free to let us know, and you can make your voice heard in the by-laws. But also, Maruf, if you want to go to the next slide. We're also creating a transition team to be present over the summer. Sort of to manage the switch from GSA to GPSS. One for the internal changes we're doing and also to communicate with, I guess wider shared governance and administration, because there is a large change in shared governance as a whole. And so we sort of need some people to manage that. And the proposed meeting is to start, I guess commitment is about 3 to 4 times over the summer. So who we're thinking will be part of that will be the current, Maruf, who has been shepherding GSA through this whole process has volunteered to chair the committee. But then who would also be the new executive Board members who we will vote on today. And then the current members of the internal affairs and judicial committee. Which is me, Aidan Murphy, our parliamentarian, and Ms. Kovak. It shouldn't be too much work couple you have times over the summer. And in preparation for next year with the new shared governance changes. Yeah. That is all from us.

>> MARUF HOQUE: All righty. Thank you. Finances. Alexis on the call.

>> Hey. So, super-quick. We just have a few updates from the graduate student budget board. Right now, we're taking applications for funding. And some of the requests you can make are for food, for events, outreach, and for conferences. You can be funded up to \$3,000 for a conference. And that's for multiple people or however many people you want to apply it for. You just have to have reasons why you need that money possibly for travel, possibly for virtual conference, either one will work.

Please convey this message to your departments and other eligible organizations. It's really important that people know so we can, you know, disperse this \$50,000 that we have and make sure that all goes to graduate organizations. Right now, we received one application. And we successfully funded them for a conference. So we like to see more coming in if possible. So make sure you communicate this. And let's see, what else? I think that's pretty much it. Maruf, did you have anything?

>> MARUF HOQUE: Focusing on the last two bullets. Another resolution, I know this was approved by the delegate body. That will confirm that whatever future policy for graduate student budget board will be dictated by GPSS by-laws, which of course will be written over the course of the summer. And planning for pilot Phase 2, which is all of the next academic year. We'll be doing that over the summer as well so, if you're interested in seeing or influencing how graduate board is structured for next academic year and beyond, definitely reach out. All right. I toss it over to Aidan. This is our maintain event for today, elections.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Yeah! All right. So, I am Aidan, of course. Your bunch of things, but now I'm the election Czar for tonight. So, I think that if we can go to the next slide, the procedure for tonight is going to be for each position. I forgot to write this in the slide of course. But there's going to be a call for any final nominations. I will ask to, for motion to close, for motion to second to close nomination for each position and then we will have the people for those positions give their statements of purpose, I suppose.

And then after each of those, well, Maruf can tell me what has historically happened. But my understanding after all the positions then we'll shove all of the candidates out of the room and talk about them. Amongst the current remaining delegates. But Maruf can correct me if I'm wrong on that.

>> MARUF HOQUE: That's what I had to do last year, so I assume so?
[Laughter] The year before, I was physically taken out of the room. So. [Laughter]

>> AIDAN MURPHY: All right. Yes, so that sounds like my -- that sounds like the plan. We'll go through each of the positions for each position, I'll ask for final nomination. Motion to close the nomination. Allow the people to give their statements. And that will be that. And what will happen afterwards, there is, instead of doing the voting here, because it has to go on the GobblerConnect anyways. What will happen is we'll simply expect the votes for positions from the vote to be put in the GobblerConnect. I think someone will send that link out. And that will open basically right after the meeting. And we'll close on Sunday night. So, that's a big chunk of time. Hopefully that's enough time to fill out some bubbles.

>> MARUF HOQUE: For a quick thing. Coogan, because you managed the elections for the last couple of years, can you give us your thought on what you have to say?

>> I don't have too many thoughts. Generally, you can consider the parliamentary and there's no one to call you out. As long as we follow the procedures we voted on, that's the only thing Constitution says that is required.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: I saw Jack's face when you said that. I know Jack is going to call me out. I depend on you to call on me if I do something wrong.

>> Yeah.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: [Laughter] I'm sure if I screw something up, we'll hear about it, which is always necessary. So that's good. All right. So I guess at this point, I'll ask if there are any questions, concerns, et cetera about the proceedings? So, I did look at the attendance. We have all of the nominees in the meet currently with the exception of someone who emailed me prior. Emailed me like couple of weeks ago

about this actually kind of giving me advance notice that because they have a class exactly from 5 to 8:00 p.m. on Thursdays, they won't be attending. So when their time comes, they sent me their statement that they would like read and I will read that. With the exception of that, everyone is here. So we're golden. All right. So, not seeing any concerns or questions, then like I said, yeah, this is the nominee for President. Are there any additional nominations from the floor? I'll give some time for this. And I do have my eyes on the chat as well in case that's where -- I have a raised hand? All right. So, I will ask Trevor, is that an indication of self nomination? Or is that a question?

>> TREVOR JEYARJ SAMRAJ: Thank you. I won't be wondering are we reading the statement presented? Or just conversational style for what we have written?

>> AIDAN MURPHY: I would say like, the more the latter. Just something that's your plans for, and your hopes for what you wish to accomplish while you're filling the role if you were to get elected. Does that make sense?

>> TREVOR JEYARAJ SAMRAJ: Yeah, thank you, great.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Perfect. All right. Well, I suppose with that, seeing no other nominations, then I will allow Jack to give his statement.

>> JACK LEFF: I'll keep this short and sweet in interest of everyone's time. My name is Jack Leff and I study tear gas if I've been a GSA delegate for last 3 years and I've been active in one committee but more commonly multiple committees each year that I've been involved. But I suspect that most of you all know me from my work raising hell among the administration. If I were to be, if I continue to be the only candidate and therefore y'all's only option I pledge to take this responsibility seriously and aggressively pursue policy changes in interest of the graduate students. Frankly, what I've learned in the last 3 years here is nothing gets done if you don't push for it. And structural changes in particular don't get done unless you insist they be structural. We have had too many administrators treat every issue as an individual problem and not as a failing of the University. And I promise that next year, that will end. And we will institute many, many structural changes in the interest of the graduate students body. And also other precarious members of the Virginia Tech community, including adjunct faculty members, staff who we often ignore in the discussion of policy, and just in general anybody who is vulnerable. And I look forward to serving if that is the will of the people.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you very much for that statement. And also your wording makes me realize I forgot. I forgot to do something. I would like to ask is there a motion to close the nominations for the position of President?

>> Motion.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Is there a second?

>> Second.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Beautiful. All right. Well, and thank you for Phil, for typing hopefully not while he's driving. [Laughter] In the chat. So let's proceed to the next position, which is Vice President. I will once again ask these are the nominations, I'll say these are the nominations for Vice President. Are there any additional nomination from the floor?

>> EMILY BURNS: So do you need somebody to do it?

>> AIDAN MURPHY: I was going to give someone a second or two to respond if they were going to. Yes, for each of these, I'll pass it on to y'all to move and second that closing. Thank you, that was a good question. So, in that spirit, I will ask, since I hear no nominations. Is there a motion to close the nominations for Vice President?

>> EMILY BURNS: Yes, I make a motion.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Moved and seconded. So these are currently our nominations for Vice President. Just in order, I will give Alice Fox a chance to make her, make their statement.

>> ALICE FOX: Hey, okay. So I am Alice. I'm also from STS. I view my role or would do my role as Vice President more of a supportive one for those of you who have heard me in the chat. I tend to just help pile on or organize and I view of miles as holding the reigns of this train as Jack goes off and does what he does. So my role would be predominantly supportive. I work on be phenomena of technology harms and abuse. So I am I pretty active proponent of transparency and vulnerability in the community which is as a graduate student. So I tend to be pretty vocal about those issues and organized in terms of following up with people. If you've read my candidate statement, I also propose what June suggested getting an ongoing ListServ and emails so other constituents can be aware of necessarily not somebody needing to attend the meeting and putting all that meeting and communication among the delegates. So that's what I would pursue helping out where I can help. And there you have it.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you very much for that statement. I think that going on, I will hand the mic off to Rongxuan Wang. Who also goes by the nickname Raphael because of the number of people I'm sure butcher his first name.

>> RONGXUAN WANG: Thank you, Aidan. My name is Rongxuan Wang. And you guys can call me Raphael. I'm a Ph.D candidate in the systems engineering department. And this is my second year involved with GSA. And I did a lot of student organizational work in our department, and I organized an organization called informs

way proposing seminars and workshops for the graduate students and connect graduate students to the faculties and other researchers from other universities and industries. And I believe I have plenty of experience to fulfill the role of this Vice President position. And if I get elected, I want to do four things. But first is to reduce the cost for the Paris street lot it's currently \$400 a year and it is very essential to the students surrounding it. There are mechanical engineering, chemical engineering in the electrical engineering and architecture students surrounding that parking lot and they don't have a very convenient transportation method to bring them from the lot and other remote lot which is cheap and second concern is, I think the minority group on this campus is now very involved with GSA, because for example, a lot of international students have language barrier. And I want to promote the GSA to the minority group of those societies. And third one is to promote the influence of GSA and help more of the voice of the graduate students who are being hurt by providing a letter box of inside the department so people can right a form and express their concern in the University level. And so more voice can be heard. And the fourth one is to organize some volunteer event that lets the delegates do some community service so we can combine with everyone to better serve this very lovely community. Yep. And thank you.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you very much for that statement. All right. So, I think we'll go on to director of programs. Once again, I ask are there any self nominations for this position?

>> I move to close the nomination.

>> Second.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: All right. So moved and seconded. So, I'll handed off the mic to Micki Palmersheim to make his statement then.

>> MICKI PALMERSHEIM: Hi, my name is Micki. I want to say thank you for sharing my platform in consideration for your director of programs. I just want to apologize, I got my second COVID vaccine this morning and it has been hitting me like a truck for the past half hour. And so, for my platform though, subjects I'm most passionate about putting my passion towards if collected graduate student financial security and advocating for student mental health. I believe both these issues have interacting roles with each other and our key factors and success of our graduate students and their future potential. In regards to graduate students financial security, I want to focus on the concern that students stipend are not reflecting the rising cost of living in Blacksburg. Clearly, attention is being brought to this issue already, but it would be privilege to represent graduate students and be part of finding a solution. In addition, I plan direct my focus on preventative approach to common challenges faced by our graduate students. Especially through transparent communication. I believe we

can provide students with tools necessary to navigate or preferably avoid challenges that lead to bigger challenges down the road. So, for example, the price of parking passes are just one really big challenge that students currently face. But the community latter is a great action that help students avoid need to spend hundreds of dollars every semester on a parking pass on campus. Other programs that the GSA implemented such as GRDP and travel fun program are excellent ways to provide students with some financial release and cook Counseling Center has incredible amount of services that helped myself and fellow graduate students kind of get through this pandemic. The problem though with their current resources is not every students is aware these are resources available to them. And more importantly, they're not aware of the program's and time for them to maximize their benefit. So these programs have a great foundation. And I'm committed to working as a team to bring improvement wherever possible on a graduate student budget, every dollar counts. So in conclusion, I want to expand on bringing awareness to current programs that aid student's financially. And with their mental health, and in addition, I plan approaching current objectives with aims of preventative action for incoming and current students. While we work on long-term correction for the benefit of future students. Thank you.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you very much for that statement. I suppose we'll hand-off next to Trevor Jeyaraj Samraj to make is their statement.

>> TREVOR JEYARAJ SAMRAJ: Thank you, everyone. And thank you for the current GSA body for their phenomenal work. And thank you to all the current nominees as well. So I'm Trevor Jeyaraj Samraj. And I go by Trevor. I'm a Ph.D student. And I have interest in CAS and raising equality and liberation and also repeat interest is operation with human attraction and all that can be liberating. And I come from a context where I have come to always celebrate our commonalities and also celebrating our differences. And not just tolerating the differences as liberal democracies do. So yeah, I grew up with the idea of temples and churches alongside and position and I bring all the fusion together. And I believe in strategic and cultural intelligence working together and being emotionally aware of people from diverse groups coming together in a setting like the University. So, I was nominated for leadership award in 2009. Yeah, and recent involvement where humanity conference, so assistantship with communication and also moderating panel on south Arab and justice and technology. And so some of regions are could be really creating connections with Virginia Tech. The student body and working with the administration, and also creating connections with other sister organizations that work together. And I believe meaningful land and open-ended dialogues and not just top-down sort of a conversation. And I think we can really tap into the synergy of not just the S.T.E.M. community but also the humanity and social science community which needs to be tapped into badly. And we would do great if we can also be multiculturally oriented and

directed towards engaging international students who often don't have a voice or who hesitate to come to leadership avenues and even, yeah, or attend due to their own reason like language and cultural assumptions. So I want to bring these vulnerable population groups and give them a platform. And working alongside. And I think we can also do a great job highlighting our folks from underrepresented bodies. And someone who has in the past gone through less access to affordable quality food, as a student, who has to save money coming from quote-unquote other places, and I have gone through times. And which affected my mental health, especially, starting post-COVID was challenging. And I bring all those sort of experiences into my -- into wherever I go and it brings me a vision of empathy, not just advocating for, but advocating for student rights. And final word would be pushing for better funding for Ph.D scholars so they have better access to platforms in national and international forums. And also to finally, we can also really organize programs where we can engage student leers from Virginia Tech if bring in leers from other universities nationally and also probably internationally. So, yeah, these are some of my visions going forward. And I would leave it up for the people for the mandate. Thank you very much.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you very much for your statements. So I think next we'll go up to the director of finance position. These are our current self-nominees. So I'll ask if there's any additional self-nominations? I hear a motion and a second. Let's go. Just to get it on record. Is there a motion to close the nominations for the director of finance?

>> Motion.

>> Is there a second?

>> Yes.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Beautiful. I figured that was the case. So, let's see. First, Anusha Prasad is the candidate I mentioned who has a class from 5 to 8 on Thursdays. So, I will read their statement first. And then I will pass the microphone off to Hannah Cunningham.

All right.

So this is the statement by Anusha Prasad. My name is Anusha Prasad. And I am a master's student in the GSI science department. I'm interested in part of the GSA executive board because I wholeheartedly believe to enrich the graduate student experience. I'm running for the position of director of finance. I have prior experience handling budgets over \$80,000 and I also have knowledge about how University allocate funding for organizations from leadership position I held at my previous institute. It is my intention to act as a team player as this position evolves and expands

as we move forward with the graduate student budget board. My goal is to act with transparency and honesty as I facilitate the GSA budget and the graduate student budget board. Thanks, Anusha. And obviously, that can't be for sending her statement ahead of time with advance notice.

With that, I will pass the mic off to Hannah Cunningham.

>> HANNAH CUNNINGHAM: Hi, I'm Hannah Cunningham. I'm a first year Ph.D student in industrial and systems engineering. Before I came to tech, I spent 5 years working in media analytics. And so I have like Anusha, experienced allocating budgets. And discussing budgetary decisions with big corporate stakeholders. I like to apply that experience to various budget board positions with the GSA. Additionally, as an industrial engineer, transparency is very important to me. So I like to make it as easy as possible if clear as possible for graduate students to be able to get money to travel to conferences, or money to host events with grad students organizations. I'd also like to keep working on this cost of living analysis and see what strides we can make for more equitable stipend levels. Thank you.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you very much. All right. So that was the last position where we had multiple self-nominations. So now we come to director of communications. This is our candidate. I'll ask are there any further nominations for this position? Hearing nothing from the floor, is there a motion to close the nominations for director of communications?

>> So moved.

>> Is there a second?

>> Second.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Wonderful. Then I'll turn it over to Amanda Borroughs to give a brief statement.

>> AMANDA BURROUGHS: Hi, I'm Amanda Borroughs and I'm a second year student in Ph.D and sociology. I've been involved in graduate student advocacy official and unofficially since my first semester at Virginia Tech. And my important thing is solid day or two among graduate students. I think a lot of grad students are not aware of what GSA or what GSA does and know how to participate. And there's barriers outside of Virginia technical going care work for family members or not having enough time or energy that may prevent them from participating in the GSA activities. As director of communications, I will prioritize solidarity and transparency especially for students who cannot engage with the GSA for whatever reason. I will focus on clear communication, better accessibility and by increasing and diversifying our social media presence.

Together we are stronger and that starts with getting everyone on the same page and quote Mother Jones. "We do not want to find fault with each other but solidify our forces, and to say to each other, we must be together, our masters are joined together and we must do the same thing." Thank you.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you very much. With that, I think we'll go on to the very last position, which is director of events. This is our self-nominee. I'll ask one last time if there are any additional nominations for this position?

>> Motion.

>> We have a motion to close nomination. Is there a second?

>> Second.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thank you to the dynamic dual. [Laughter] So with that, let's give Emily Burns the chance to make their statement.

>> EMILY BURNS: Hi, everyone. My name is Emily Burns. I use she, her pronouns. I am excited to be a candidate for the directors of events. This past year, I was the delegate to the disability alliance. And so, my major hope and focus is to plan events that are inclusive as possible for as many people as possible. So what that means for me and what that looks like is planning for accessibility from the start to finish for all of events from marketing, all the way to the event itself. So for me, that would look like taking wheelchair accessible venues, labeling food ingredients, allowing folks to participate in whatever way they feel comfortable. Promoting accessible presentation guidelines. And inviting participants to let us know if they have any access needs. I also have lots of experience making marketing materials accessible. So I use image descriptions and high color contrast. And then at events, I would love to post signs for restrooms, including all gender restrooms or single occupancy restrooms. I would give people the option to include their pronouns on their name tags. And I also would like to build off of what June did this past year by trying to use local source food and using locally owned businesses. As well as using biodegradable products. And then overall, I feel excited about planning the back to school kind of BBQ we have as well as the major events that we often have in the spring. As well as educational events on graduate student advocacy. Dissertation and thesis writing tips. Managing and imposter syndrome. So overall, it's an honor to run. And I thank you, all, for listening. Thanks so much.

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Thanks so much for giving us your statement. I think with that, we now kickoff of the people into possibly a waiting room. Or a breakout room. And then talk about them behind their backs right in front of them. [Laughter]

>> SHARON FLYNN STIDHAM: I have asked all of our nominees to please join the breakout room. And, hopefully, they will. Is this the moment I ask the captioner to stop.

(Captioner standing by).

You.

>> Yeah, we can all see the chat. It doesn't update or anything.

>> MARUF HOQUE: So closing off. We like to acknowledge Dean DePauw. It's been, I was one of the students that was on the search committee for here if those who don't know, she's retiring. And I think being on the search committee for me, it's been a little eye-opening to see her impact not only of Virginia Tech and across graduate education in this country. And I'm little privileged to say this, but on behalf of 20 plus years of graduate students, Dean DePauw, thank you. And you've got a few minutes to say something.

>> KAREN DEPAUW: Well, thank you for -- thanks. And actually, what I was going to do is make sure that I thank all of you for all of your efforts for this year. The exec board, the leadership, and all of the delegates. I think it's been a very interesting year, as you can imagine, well, as you know, because we've been in these little screen things. But it's been a pleasure to work with you all this year. And the 20 years, or 19 years that I've been here. So you all will be in good hands. I don't know who will be the next person. But all three of them are capable current sitting deans, and in my conversations with each of them, they expressed a desire to continue to be student-focused, continue to advance the things that we have been doing. So, thanks for the thanks, but thank you you for all of the work that you have done. And I can't believe. I heard you say the other day, this is your last GSA meeting. And it's mine as well.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Yes.

>> KAREN DEPAUW: But it's not like I'm not going to see you all. And my retirement is some time in August. So I will still be around. But thank you, Maruf, and thanks, GSA.

>> MARUF HOQUE: Thank you, Dean DePauw. With that, we have bit of time for open forum before I have the final statement. So we have couple of minutes to recap anything? Or should I just move on?

>> I have a question, Maruf. I was talking to the director of my program. And they were kind of talking about the concern about their raising of the apartment rents for the next year. And they were asking if GSA can do something, like, kind of pushing the University to push the town of Blacksburg not to raise it as much as they want to do?

Because the stipend are not going high that much. I don't know if that's possible. But I just wanted to kind of, you know, state this concern here.

>> MARUF HOQUE: You broke up a bit. But you were talking about apartments?

>> Yeah.

>> MARUF HOQUE: So that was really the purpose of the cost of living survey. It's really just a recap of where we're at. Additionally, I didn't say this, but I received a market report data from Dr. Shoushock that cost of the new River Valley is expected to increase 4% which is over the national average. The final report we're putting together is just to highlight all of these issues we're facing.

>> But is it going to do anything? Do we have any power over that?

>> MARUF HOQUE: Exactly, it's like, you know, apartments are like privately owned. So at the end of the day, no. But it's just highlighting this to the community or really to administrators saying, this is a situation we're in. Stipends need to go up for all of us to live and work in this area.

>> Okay. Thank you.

>> So I guess at the end of day, nothing can be promised but that is one of the major goals of the cost of living survey and its compilation. If I can succinctly speak for Maruf and put words in his mouth. [Laughter]

>> MARUF HOQUE: Thank you. All right. With that, I'd like to give all of you just a personal thank you. And kind of just go over all the accomplishments that I think we've done this year. First, just calling out the diversity subcommittee. Fantastic work. That's a very well concise report that I think can be a huge long point for advocacy point next year. The buy Blacksburg, maybe this is not the best due to everything being closed and companies don't want to give free stuff away. But excellent start, thank you, June for taking that on. The graduate cost of living report, I think this should be the launch point for many forms of advocacy and all things like that for the coming years. To the Constitution rewrite people, phenomenal work. I hope this Constitution lasts for years. And of course, all of the individuals that were involved with the graduate budget board. This, I really hope that lasts for a long time. And this is a symbol of the power of GSA in terms of how we can manage the funds we pay and reallocate money to the graduate students here at Virginia Tech. Lastly, to the exec board and Dryden, that you have been phenomenal this entire year. And to the delegate body, I realize that this year has been hard to everyone. Whether we struggled seeing things on Zoom, whatever else problems we've had, dealing with COVID. I know some of us had family

illnesses and death because of COVID. I cannot that you know enough for trusting me during this time to be your President and with that, I thank you and I ask for a motion to close.

>> Motion to close.

>> Second.

>> MARUF HOQUE: All righty. Thank you!

(Applauds) ooh!

>> AIDAN MURPHY: Nice.