

GSAVT – General Assembly

Thursday, September 3, 2020

5:15-6:00 p.m.

For those of you who are new, normally with this in-person, we do start at 5:00 p.m. We offer an in-person environment, food, and much conversation before the start of the meeting at 5:30.

This year between COVID and all of the stress with getting space, something I'm sure Scott is entirely too familiar with, we decided to go virtual for this meeting.

When we have an in-person meeting, fingers crossed that it will be October, we will have to limit the number of people we can allow at the in-person parts.

In this moment it will be first come, first served.

I don't know how it's going to work.

It may be completely different by October.

Just to put a plug in for events services, they have been marvelous working with us.

Are people hearing music?

Can you hear music?

>> I hear the music.

>> Sorry.

I have to find something else to put on.

Caption test.

Caption test.

Caption test.

Caption test.

AWAD, can you check ask see if you can share a screen?

>> We just finished a CSA meeting.

>> That's fine.

>> Those of you who have recently joined, look to the chat for Awad's announcement for sign in.

>> The sign in is only for those who are departing the program.

If you are not, you don't have to sign in.

>> Shoot me a note on chat and I will add you to my list of folks who are here.

You are exactly right, Scott.

>> Good afternoon, everyone.

>> How about I give everyone another minute to settle in.

>> Don't give me time to figure out what I did.

>> We are also very far from quorum.

If you are a delegate and have not filled out the form I put in the chat, please sign in.

>> There is an awful lot of -- sorry, I wasn't looking, obviously.

>> For those of you who are not delegates, if you would please send me a private message with your name and the organization that you a part of, I would really appreciate it.

>> All right, I'm relatively settled in.

>> We are one short of quorum.

We are going make a party for whoever the last delegate is.

We have a quorum.

>> All right.

Good afternoon, everyone.

Or evening.

I'm not sure what time it is.

Welcome to the first assembly meeting on Zoom.

I don't exactly know how Robert's tools work, but that's something we will discuss.

Can I have a motion to begin?

>> Yes.

>> Great.

Do I have a second?

>> Second.

>> Excellent.

Let's begin.

Of course our first meeting today, I think over the duration of this semester, unless something amazing happens, I think all of these will be on Zoom.

Stay tuned for Zoom links and all things like that as the semester progresses.

Just a shameless plug for all of our social media.

Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and we have a rebounded that we talked about later today.

So just a quick overview of these meeting structures and how it's going to work.

Our agenda will be posted on line on our website and the one evening prior to the assembly meeting.

We will do our best to get it by 5:00 p.m. All of these meetings will be reported and posted online.

With the meeting transcript.

We are working on video, so we will figure that out.

No promises on that, but in terms of a text transcript, that will be posted online.

Overall structure for the meetings, we are not following this today, but for the rest of them, our first 15 minutes will be an open forum.

This is the time for you.

Bring whatever concerns you have to us and we will figure out ways of facilitating that discussion and take it up or down, whichever way it needs to go.

Following that, we will have exec officer updates and GSA task force updates which we will talk about later today.

At the very end, we will have comments for resolutions and voting.

The agenda today we will give a very, very quick overview of the Virginia Tech governance chart.

We are going to have executive officer introductions and updates from us.

Then we will talk about committees and intro to cocounseling for graduate students, which I understand a person is here today.

Then we have an update from the united feminist movement, climate action resolution that we will be talking about, and advocacy initiatives for the GSA and end with the open forum.

I would like to quickly apologize, my E-mail has been very busy and I realize this is not the exact schedule that was sent out.

Basically 8:00 to 2:00 p.m., a lot of people talk about this with the assembly.

I was like sure.

We will get to that.

Apologies for not providing the most up to date structure.

A lot of E-mails came in from starting at 8:00 a.m. this morning.

All right, so this is I think many of you have seen this.

This is the governance structure of Virginia Tech.

I don't know if you see my arrow on the screen or not, but the board of visitors is the highest body of governance of Virginia Tech.

The member is appointed by the governor and then the president.

I have to figure out how this works.

Then comes the president and university council and a bunch of commissions.

GSA has the board of visitors and each committee commission.

Additionally administration and various factions of the administration have periodic meetings with GSA exec board.

Whatever concern you have, there is most likely someone on this call that can take it up the pipeline somewhere.

Worst case default, I didn't introduce myself, I'm your president.

Send everything to me and I will take it up in some fashion or format.

I'd like to introduce all of our GSA officers and individuals involved.

It's been a very busy summer.

All of us have looked like this.

I will start to call individuals out as the PowerPoints go on.

I am your president this year.

I am a third year student in biology, medicine, and health program.

I am happy to serve you this year.

Also if you would like one on one meetings with me, feel free to use this link and we will make this public after this meeting.

Feel free to use that.

I will pass this on to our VP.

You can unmute yourself and talk.

>> Can you hear me?

Hi, everybody.

I'm award and I'm a fifth year and hopefully final year in the transportation systems engineering program.

I am serving as the vice president and legislative affairs for this year for the GSA.

That really breaks down into two major subtasks with the GSA delegation and I had the communication and the departments program, etc., and the delegates.

Delegates will be receiving communications from me before the meeting, if we need help.

I am still in touch with the department.

We are still very far from having the poll delegation because of COVID and how fast things are going.

People have their hands busy with other things as well.

Maruf and I have the situation to create executive working groups.

Anyone on this call, anyone attending general assembly and any grad student at all who looks into creating a working group or a task force can look into something specific.

This is how to make it official and we will be happy to assist you.

Again, we will speak about this later on in the open forum and what not.

Really, there is an ability for everyone here.

My second responsibility comes with the university governance structure that we went over.

I deal with our representatives and delegation to those specific commissions and committees and basically coordinate those.

You can scroll to the next slide.

Just quick numbers on those items.

Our delegation last year had 125 delegates.

We only have 75 of them confirmed at this point.

We are still far off from having a full delegation.

The quorum by Constitution is 30 delegates or a 30 of our active delegation.

We need quorum for voting other things that we have to confirm in meetings.

If you are a delegate, please make sure you attend the general assembly meetings.

In F not, you can send in a proxy by E-mailing me or through communications and we handle it from there.

Regarding university governance, we are starting really well this year.

We have 26 seats filled out of 32.

We would like to have that filled hopefully.

The commissions, some of them may not even discuss something that registers through the year.

We need to have that presence established.

Not play the devil's advocate, but if you were given a seat at the table and you can find it, you will end up with many.

So those are the six empty seats we have now.

Commencement committee, I don't know if we lost the presentation.

>> Give me a minute so I can open it.

>> The six seats that we have empty at this point, two of them are things that we did not have -- we had a representative on the line last year, but not through the summer.

We didn't have anyone on commencement and those are two people that they didn't like how they went downhill.

We have those seats empty.



We have three voting seats at university council that said the second to highest entity at the university approves all the resolutions and everything at the university.

One of those seats is vacant.

We need the commission and there is a bunch of us.

We have an extra seats and we have a commission about the international affairs.

Feel free as a delegate to share with constituents.

As someone on the call, if any of those interest you, reach out to me and everyone is eligible to serve.

One last thing about this, those who serve on commissions and committees are not department delegates.

We will confirm them as delegate at large and confirmed by the general assembly on the next assembly meeting.

Something that used to happen in previous year is we had many people serving on the same committees and different committees and commissions.

What we want to do is have different people interact with those administrators.

If they hear the same complaints from the execs or the same people who are active graduate students outside, it doesn't resonate as much.

The more on board, the more we --

[ INAUDIBLE ].

That was my quick run off.

I will pass it off to the next person.

Sharon?

>> Sorry, I can't multitask as well as I used to.

I am a Ph.D. in the school of education in the structural design and technology department.

I take care of external and internal communications.

Some of the internal communications for the GSA.

With external, I run the website, we have a new one.

Social media, Facebook, Twitter.

I will admit that Instagram is a bit of a challenge because I have to create new graphics every time I post something and E-mail them to my phone.

In terms of programs and events, I make sure it gets on the calendar and get the notices out and work on press releases and on the various platforms, I share official information from the graduate school from Virginia Tech, other information as it becomes available, especially from the board of visitors.

In terms of internal communication, we are using as you may notice at the bottom of your screen, we have closed captioning, which our previous wonderful director of communications started with the CART people.

She is our new director of programs.

We are looking at creating -- we are trying to get branding in terms of a look and feel going.

If you can go to the next screen, this is our current draft of our updated logo.

What we are trying to do is pay homage to the past and yet get a more forward-looking look to our logo.

That's going to be rolled out.

Soon I am working with the GSA and in the NCR.

The DC Metro area is called to work on a unified look for all three of our groups.

That's me.

>> The next person is June.

>> Hi, everybody.

I'm June Jones, a second year aspect student, the alliance for social, political and ethical thought.

A shout out for those representing us.

As the director of events, I'm in charge of figuring out the logistics behind the events, Sharon helps me a lot with room reservations and things.

I'm kind of responsible for communicating with stakeholders and other offices of the university.

Also figuring out especially this year which events are possible, given the guidelines we have been given not just by events, but by the government and the university.

So, though we usually have certain planned events this fall, I wanted to update you that we have a few things planned.

Our biggest fund-raiser is the GSA graduate and professional school fair that will be happening this fall.

It will be virtual.

We have invested in a platform called raisin that should make it easier than ever to participate.

You can be in your pajamas and chatting with recruiters from schools.

That will be happening on October 7th for a nice long period of time from 10-4.

Recruiters are being made aware of that now and hopefully we will get plenty of people coming in to talk to our students.

Gobbler fest is going to be virtual as well this year.

We have been invited to host graduate organizations.

I have also communicated with all the registered graduate student organizations about having socially distanced tabling at this event.

This should be happening from 6:00 to 8:00 on September 30th.

You should also get the word out there.

I haven't heard back from that many people yet.

This is something to be made aware of.

I will continue to put communications out about this to get people to show up.

It's a ticketed event and also run through the graduate school.

It will be top notch.

I think there are 60 bottles of hand sanitizer and vigorous ticketing out.

It should be a great opportunity to know about graduate student organization and very safe.

It will be also a great opportunity for everybody to see what the university thinks is safe and make a model off of this.

Basically coming into the office, I had ideas about partnering with local businesses in the community in an attempt to create some kind of partnership for graduate students and also help reduce the burden of living in blacksburg.

I have been reaching out to businesses and I have two fish caught.

We have blacksburg farmers market and they agreed to give us discounts this year.

We are going to be putting a sticker on our student IDs because they do not identify us as graduate students, but I want to make it easier for businesses to know that we are graduate students and we have a discount created for us.

Hopefully marketing will come out to all the graduate students soon about that once I nail down a few more specifics and we can get those stickers for you.

We are thinking about having the stickers ready for the September 30th event so people can come in person and we will make the stickers accessible for the graduate school or the front desk so everyone can get to it eventually.

I came in running on a platform of zero waste and buying local and things like that, but of course this year is pretty easy to be low waste when we are not having in-person events.

We would feed you, but we are not allowed.

It's very difficult to virtually feed people.

Have your own food and know that any money being saved is being used in the best way possible to fund maybe future travel grants other than things like the little hokey hand me down will be happening as well.

We are going to try to take care of you the best we can and use the events to provide the best services we can and keep you safe.

Thank you.

>> All right.

The next member is Martina.

>> This is a lot less about me and more about y'all.

So programs include the travel fund program, which if you have been in GSA for a while, you will start to hear us refer to as TFP.

For all only, we will only be looking at the virtual traveling options.

Kind of in line with what SDV is doing with conference travel and encouraging physical distancing and participating in a virtual setting.

This is the graduate development program under review.

If you have been sending me E-mails asking questions about that.

The doctor rich's cap and gown program, which is the low cost cap and gown rental at graduation time.

The research symposium and exposition or GSARS in the spring.

This past year, the research symposium is on an online format.

I'm looking forward to exploring further in the upcoming year.

So funding, programs manages the budget for TF, and the GRDP but we do not raise or put money into the pools.

The money that GSA raises specifically related to programs is for research symposium for operations and for awards.

I am specifically on the hunt, looking out for people who are interested in getting more involved with GSA.

They don't want to be an exec member because we had elections last April.

And chair applications are open online.

Sharon has been doing a great job sharing that through GSA's channels and had has been listed in a weekly E-mail that you get from, I think it's surface right now.

I'm going to be dropping the link in the chat just in case you're bored and want to fill out this application during the meeting.

That's it from me.

>> All right.

I will pass this on to our director of finance.

TAHSIN.

>> Hi, everyone.

This is TAHSIN and I welcome you to the first assembly meeting it's R as the director of finance for the graduate students.

I'm a student in the department of engineering education.

A shout out to the two reps here.

So basically I am responsible for all the financial matters that is within the GSA and I also advise the executive counsel of the financial situation of GSA.

I work closely with different members and others in organizations as well, especially with Virginia Tech.

I will be happy to assist you in terms of finance questions for different student organizations and anything regarding student budget sources for different organizations as well.

Thank you.

>> All right.

Thank you.

And I would like to also know and introduce you to the board of visitors rep.

I believe she is on the call.

>> I am on the call.

>> Perfect.

>> Hello, all.

I'm Sabrina and I'm the graduate student representative meaning what it sounds like.

My job is to represent ways to the board of visitors, the highest governing body at the university.

When I advocated, I ran on a platform consisting of emphasis on mental health care access, food insecurity and graduate assistantship security.

Although that's what I ran on, as of lately, I have been trying to address the things that are at the forefront of graduate students' minds.

It's one of advocacy and that's where I plan to lead it from.

In short, my focus is as fellow graduate students, if there are things going on on campus, I want to look into it.

Let me know your experience.

I'm going list my E-mail in the chat so if any of you would like to reach out and talk, I would be happy to schedule one on one time.

Excited to serve this year.

Reach out if you need me.

>> All right.

That concludes our students of the executive board.

And Sabrina as well.

Before we go on, I would like to take a second and introduce our advisers.

Sorry to call you guys out.



If Monika Gibson could say hello and a quick word.

>> Hello.

Quick word.

>> Thank you, Monika.

That describes her very well.

>> You got it.

>> Would you like to say anything else?

>> No, I think that you guys can just move the meeting along.

I'm happy to chime in when I have con tonight offer.

I'm here to assist with information and resources.

>> Thank you again.

Lastly, Karen dePAUW.

>> I serve as vice president and Dean for education and one of those people that will send things to try to get some things done at the university.

It really is a pleasure to welcome you and I wish we could all be in person, but the virtual world will have to suffice at this point.

I am very interested as Sabrina was saying, what the issues and concerns that you have and I can -- I will be available for you either as a body or individually to share some of your concerns and I will try to ask questions and get your feedback as we move forward.

Welcome to the unusual fall of 2020.

>> Thank you to everyone.

>> Moving on to the agenda items for today, we will go over this.

Standing committees, this body needs.

This individual is very critical because we will need them for voting procedures.

To have things working. And correct me if I'm wrong, we need a student budget board.

Part is used by the budget board to serve from the community and beyond.

Also the university basically.

If anyone is interested to understand how the budget works and I assume the budget board is the right place for you.

We meet once a week on Mondays from 4:00 to 6:00.

Let me know if you are interested.

Thank you.

And I will talk about it a bit more later on once I get to the advocacy portion of this.

We will talk about that later on.

I understand that we have a co-counselor for graduate students for you.

I understand she is on the call.

>> If she could say a quick hello.

I'm really excited to be the psychologist to you and all the graduate students at Virginia Tech.

6:15-7:15 p.m.

Remote CART

>> How does that make sense?

I don't understand. It doesn't make sense at all. I think we need to find a way to make a note, some students who are afraid to come to campus and then cannot, you know, get the service, full service out of the -- that was my comment for that. The other for the parking they should allow campus office hours.

How they are going to find parking place once they are Rushing for labs.

Who has duties on the labs? These are my main comments. Take actions on this on COVID-19 case and I think students will appreciate if we can, you know, find middle way and the middle way that it's not going hurt Virginia Tech administration and also the students. I think we can find a way in the middle. Thank you very much for the opportunity. I aim at going to share in the chat right now what currently exists to address that comprehensive fee situation.

We have already had a meeting, was it last -- just last Friday, other board members, I can't remember about this, because we also feel passionately about the fees, lack of services, the disconnect between graduate students and what services are on offer.

The link I share is the fact that shares from the office, the comprehensive fees and the 300-dollar reduction request that an individual has to pursue.

They have to meet specific requirements in order to get this reduction, but this is a piece of information you can share broadly.

>> Yes.

Thank you very much.

I was aware of that link.

I actually shared that information with my friends, but it requires all students to go to virtual campus.

They are away from 50 miles, doesn't do reduction.

We tried that.

It's not working because -- understand.

>> Under the circumstances they're just asking for everyone to go virtual, so like I understand also people can, you know, like to students can be unsecured about going

virtual because they have always been on campus and I suggested the link to my friends who are afraid to come to campus and didn't work.

Thank you very much for the information but I already knew it but it under circumstances as you just said.

>> Great.

If you can have your friends e-mail gsa@vtaedu and how the requirements don't fit.

I'm sorry my child is screaming in the background.

>> No problem.

>> If we have more of these cases of this actually doesn't work and these restrictions are just in place and 50 miles doesn't necessarily make sense and virtual campus, you can enroll in virtual campus if you're just doing research hours --

>> Exactly.

>> Looks like Blacksburg campus.

If we can get more of the examples among small circle of people that we interact within our own departments, we have a stronger case when we are talking to the people running budget numbers.

>> Sure, I will share that information with you.

Thank you very much.

>> All right.

Tommy has his hand up.

>> Hello.

I think I can address one of the questions because I'm in the transportation committee something, something.

This isn't directly cause and effect but I know that you -- you can pay hourly in case you have let's say duties and you need to park for an hour or something.

I don't know if it's economically reasonable because they are still working on some of the details u but that's something maybe to look, hopefully forward to or watch out for, but I think at least for parking they're not -- I think trying their best is not quite the right word but they are trying.

[Laughter]

>> Thank you.

>> And I think Phil is there in case I said anything wrong or what not but, yeah.

They are trying.

>> I would like to add one comment on the transportation.

I noticed on the parking, they have to increase like a price for that one so also coming through our parking and they decided on that one?

>> Can you repeat -- repeat that, again, I missed part of it.

>> Paid parking, parking system.

So the price hasn't increased, so before it was like 25 cents for 15 mint or something like that and now it's like 8 minute for one quarter.

So it also coming through the committee, everything like deciding on that one?

>> I think that is something that if I were in the committee longer we probably should have talked about, but I went through my first committee meeting, Oh, my God, Wednesday.

I think details like this are part of the conversation.

I think that's the answer to your question.

>> All right.

>> Yes.

>> So hold on.

I like to kind of move on because we are kind of running short on time and we have time for open discussion at the end of the meeting.

So, I mean, the goal of these initiatives is not to come to these meetings to complain about the university, it's actually write them down so I can take them up to administrators and say, look, our graduate students are annoyed about everything here.

It's -- I mean, I appreciate everyone's comments here, I genuinely do but I can't really do anything because a graduate student complained in the meeting and they will say so what.

And that's basically how administrators work.

The goal is to say, you kind of take charge of these initiatives that I'm pointing out and then form a problem-type of thing around it and bring some kind of documentation to me that I can carry up or down the pipeline.

So kind of the goal I have here if I can move onto my next slide is I would like to form a task -- go back.

Here.

Yeah.

Form a task force around each of the initiatives that I've stated today and I'm asking five of you guys to volunteer for one task force that you're entrusted in.

By the next assembly meeting, by the next assembly meeting the goal is to present questions that we can use to gather data from graduate schools and other sources at Virginia Tech and November 5th which is the following meeting, the goal is to share this in multiple settings at the university to make concrete changes across.

I hope this kind of clears the air about the way I'm planning on like handling the semester, and to provide a little bit more context, I don't think this is going to be like a one-off, let's meet, talk about things and carry on.

I'd like to talk about some of the work that's being done with the diversity initiative, so a group of students and I have met over the summer as you guys know, Virginia Tech is not diverse in many ways, yes, we are but we can always do much better.

And the group of students and I came up with a bunch of questions and the goal was to see how can we better -- how can we make our departments even better than what it is.

So I've -- I'm communicating with a graduate data person, a data analyst at the graduate school and it's boiled down to like these 5 things that we are looking at for the graduate students at Virginia Tech.

Point 1, discrimination or experiences at Virginia Tech.

There's a climate survey given every 2 or 3 years and exit survey data that we can use to analyze the differences. Stipend differences among minorities, international student experience.

It's a variable that we don't exactly have access to but we kind of have to figure out how to look at that.

The degree of completion and retention for various individuals.

I haven't looked at this yet but we have to further analyze to see where we are and how we can make the numbers better and job placement of underrepresented minorities afterwards and we can get this on the exit survey but it's kind of what I'm asking you, guys, to do with all of the above.

Does this kind of make sense?

And you can do like a thumbs up or thumbs down, I think, I don't know if I can see that.

Or maybe a hand raise, I might be able to see that.

Okay.

Great.

Okay.

Great.

I'm seeing a lot of hand raises.

I'm sorry, I don't see everyone's screen and I'm unsure where things are at.

So I kind of want to kick this off.

Who wants to volunteer for graduate student compensation?

>> I can do that.

>> I'm not sure who said that, but --

>> This is Gustafa.

>> Excellent.

I can get the name down.

>> I'm also the GSA rep for Turkey Student Association.

>> Meant, thank you.

Student services.

Any takers?

This is by the way to make everyone's life a little bit easier I think this initiative is primed to change for graduate students at the school.

Doctor is given a lot of promises and I'm going to hold him up for that.

>> And I'm very happy to contribute to that or help that group in any way I can since my area work aside from advising the GSA is Gen services.

>> You get to work with Monica.

>> That's a special treat, right?

>> I think in the chat I mentioned student services and student has, if someone could take the name down.

I've noticed Emily Burns has volunteered for diversity in the chat.

Capital planning projects, everyone complaints about not having great apartments.

We will ask the university to build apartments.

Any volunteers?

Okay.

We will wait for that one, I guess.

Do you have your hand raised or --

>> No, that was for something earlier.

Sorry about that.

>> That was for diversity.

>> Oh, okay, great.

>> And going Green?

>> We have Becca Salgado volunteered for Capital Planning.

>> Excellent.

>> And going green.

All right, jack is there.

All right, I would like to talk with each of you individually at some point just to kind of talk about what ideas I have and moving forward.

And by the way, this is not only one student.

A group of students to talk about each of these students and with diversity we've already formed a group so I will connect you with everyone else, just so all of you can work together on that initiative.

All right.

I have two more initiatives that I would --

>> I'm sorry, you have a question in chat.

Are these groups limited to delegates?

>> So, no.

Short answer is no, but in terms of voting procedures when we sum things up, only delegates can vote at that moment.

So if you -- if there's broader graduate students that wish to be involved, send out that message.

Even if you're on the call.

But I think the way our constitution is written now, if you're the chair of this group you have to be a delegate.

>> That's right.



>> But I don't want to like prohibit any graduate student if they're excited about any of these things from getting involved like get involved and we will figure out a way to hear your concerns and have things moved up the pipeline.

>> So there's a small percentage that by based on the number of delegation we can -- we can designate as delegates at large and they will have voting privileges and that's only 10% of the delegation, so we can have a maximum of 12 if we get a full delegation.

But that's one way.

It's not a huge issue.

>> All right.

I will meet with you individually and we will talk about next steps and how to do things.

Two more initiatives, that's more internal to the graduate student assembly of this body.

Number 1, I've heard many complaints about our constitution.

It's my opinion that I don't want to hear complaints anymore.

I just like to overhaul it.

I think if you joined the internal affairs committee or judicial committee, I'm asking you guys to do this.

I don't think I can tell you to do it but I can strongly recommend you to do it.

Rewrite this, it's like 60 pages long or something like that.

I will be honest, I haven't read it and I'm not planning on reading it.

Make it make more sense and analyze the function of the delegates, to have graduate student body and executive board and make this body as -- as efficient as we can.

Two, this will be happening at some point, our organization name will most likely change to the graduate and professional student assembly and based on how shared governance is looking at this university, it's currently changing.

We might become a Senate, I'm not exactly sure what that means in terms of technicalities so we might become the graduate and professional student, so this may land somewhere sometime this year.

So I'm kind of asking people to join internal affairs and judicial.

By the way Judicial, we need someone there because we need a Parliamentarian, any volunteers for judicial or Internal Affairs?

Any people that love writing constitutions?

[Laughter]

>> Someone wrote, Chad, I guess.

>> Rose could do internal affairs, judicial.

Aiden, feel free to join.

Please take the names down, someone and then we will talk about things at some point as well.

And the last one, I think, people will be happy about this.

I have received many verbal promises that the distribution and allocation that students pay will be controlled more by graduate students than the current board structure and if you're here and you complained about student budget board, join to help write rules on how student activity fees are going to be reallocated.

In my conversations with various individuals, I've said we will be focusing on 3 funding items, travel for conferences, outreach and small food items for your department gatherings and I received verbal promise that this will go effect in January 2021.

And as Jack said whoever does this job would be the most popular student in the university and I have pushed for this thing for a year and we are as close as we are.

So I -- I will be there side by side with you drafting the rules, Dawson, director of finance will be doing the exact same and we just need some rules to be written down and Dawson has done a good bit of work understanding how other universities run -- run their student finance.

>> Yeah, I just wanted to add that we have been pushing really hard since summer with the current administration to make this happen and we've got promises.

So we've got lot of verbal promises and we are working with policies and procedures and if we have a team we can start doing it as soon as possible.

>> Quick correction, this has been not just the summer, it's been almost a year.

This is like the first thing I said when I came to GSA last year, so well before that and I'm sure there have been more students prior to me.

And, yes, this is the money -- so to June's question, yes, this is specifically from the student activity fee line item.

>> Just for context for everyone to know how big this is, as for now the money that we have at GSA for travel, for conference travel, for research grant and for purchasing food back in the preCOVID times, those are either, you know, self-generated funds or money that comes from the state and it's not a lot of money.

So getting a chunk of the money that we pay to student budget fee and never use is going to be something substantial to improve all those, so the more people who can help with this is going to be great to help.

>> Dawson needs a finance committee anyways, so this will be, I think, the main initiative for the next month and a half or so.

So if anyone wishes to join, please join.

So I'm kind of leaving with a little bit of a summary slide.

There's 3 standing committees as mentioned, internal affairs, judicial and finance.

Please join one of them.

There's 7 different task forces which some of the standing committees will participate in.

I'd like 2 or 3 students at minimum to join either of the standing committee or the task force and one delegate should chair each task force, keep documentation, records, et cetera.

And the exact board particularly myself and Awad will -- will be more than happy to help you guys as the semester progresses.

>> We have a question in Chad.

I just lost it because it moved.

>> If we had people in cohort joining task force to whom should we direct them?

>> Awad.

Awad is the director of legislative affairs.

To take some of the burden off you can direct it to myself as well and we will coordinate with the right person.

>> Generally just as rule of thumb e-mail and one of us take it over.

No worries about that.

>> Yeah.

I don't know if that was a question or a comment.

One to have rectangle things, there's a lack of transparency because of limited report, okay, I won't finish the rest of that.

Thank you, jack, for your comment.

[Laughter]

>> What's a typical time commitment is a comment by Katie.

In my opinion a maximum of one hour a week.

And Martino, put in a plug, apply for the program chairs and I -- I'd love to have offline conversations on how student fees work.

All right, we have approximately 15 minutes left and this is our open forum and I'm happy to feel any questions that you guys.

>> Before we go, before we go with open forum we have update from the representative to the graduate honor system.

If you can click the update before we move on to the open forum.

>> Sure, yes, so I see Monica and Kayla are also on Zoom and they can feel free to chime in if I miss anything or misstate anything but basically there was a group of us that met over the summer about revising the GSA constitution and it was -- I believe article 12 in the constitution and it was basically to put in to the constitution that degrees, there was some mechanism for degrees to be revoked if there was any type of plagiarism or any egregious offense.

So like falsification of data and so we went through the constitution and basically put in those mechanisms for the revocation of degrees should there be any type of offenses.

And so I just wanted to make GSA aware that that is something that's -- that has recently happened.

I see that Monica has put in the chat the current GSA -- or sorry DHS constitution and so you guys can feel free to take a look at that, send it to your constituents so that, you know, everyone is just aware, but definitely just we wanted to give that update that the review committee did make some revisions to the constitution and there is now wording in place for degrees to be revoked and that will be sent out to the board of visitors and the board of visitors will obviously have to approve that before it becomes official, but that is something that a group of us worked on over this summer and basically put that in motion and so we are going to wait to see what the board of visitors say and if it gets approved.

>> Okay.

Thank you.

>> Yes, thank you.

>> Any other updates before we officially start open forum?

All right.

I guess we will start open forum.

Aidan.

>> Hello, first I'm Aidan and I'm new to the assembly and I'm a representative for the mathematics department.

I just got a quick question because Robert's rules of order were brought up.

I was wondering how strictly those were being adhered to for this meeting and future meetings, if they were particularly strictly close to the guidelines or if the Robert rules were more of a loose guideline for the structure of the meetings.

>> More of a loose guideline, more so structure.

When voting happens that's probably the most I would like to be.

>> Okay.

>> It's hard to in my opinion, in my opinion it's hard to implement that over Zoom.

I'm not sure if anyone does that effectively, so just kind of there.

I hope that answers your question in some way.

>> Yeah that does, thank you very much.

Also full disclosure I'm not the biggest fan of Roberts rules, but I understand that they give some kind of order to meetings.

>> Well, that's why they are called Roberts rules of order, right?

[Laughter]

>> Yeah.

Yeah, The Zoom calling that can take care of a lot of things.

>> Isis, if you're speaking, you're on mute.

I'm not sure if you're speaking to us.

>> I -- oh.

>> Tommy, yeah.

>> I don't know if this is a reasonable question to ask but I'm going to ask it anyway.

I think last year there was talk about what was it I think after your -- there was supposed to be tuition sort of reduction or something like this.

Is that still happening or is this still on someone's desk?

>> It's on someone's desk.

>> It's been on this individual's desk for quite some time now.

>> Roger, Roger.

>> Do you want me to answer that?

>> Yes.

>> Okay.

It is called the candidacy status and that was approved through the commission on graduate and professional studies, all the way through university council and Tommy, it did provide those who had passed prelims that there would be a reduction in the cost of tuition for grad students as a candidate.

Candidacy status.

That was passed and the -- it was recommended not -- the president has not acted on that, the recommendation was not to act at that point and last year there was a course on graduate education and I know that they considered that candidacy status resolution and it is -- it is included in the report and so I'm hopeful that that we will see some movement on that this year and relatively soon.

>> Thank you very much.

>> You're welcome.

Sorry it's not better news because you know I'm supportive of that, but --

>> What do you guys want to see happen this year which is very broad and weird question?

>> What was it again, can you repeat the question, Maruf?

>> What do you want to see happen this year?

>> What do you want to see happen this year?

>> I want 2020 to end as soon as possible.

>> Well, we got 4 months left.

Three months, I don't know.

>> I like the initiatives that you've chosen for your advocacy and for people to work with you on these committees.

I think those are exactly the issues we are most concerned about.

>> This is Emily, can I ask a question?

>> Of course.

>> One thing that I would like to see happen at some point is more structure related to advertising graduate assistant positions or at least more transparency about that.

Are any of your committees addressing that?

Right now with COVID it's on the back-burner for me but it is something that I care about.

>> So I -- so I guess I formed the committees to be in loose structure and I want them to be student run.

Whoever is in the committee I want you to drive the conversation forward.

So when -- so it's not directly addressed but it can in my opinion, that can be addressed in the graduate compensation committee.

>> Can I join that committee?

I guess.

>> Sure.

[Laughter]

>> Okay.

>> I'm sorry, as a result of your comment, Maruf, that means that there's some overlapping and that would be okay, you know, being in one committee you might have to kind of, you know, might be related to a different committee, that shouldn't be kind of like a silo-type of situation and more comprehensive approach?

>> More or less.

The question was asked in the chat -- it becomes -- I can see how it becomes a little fudgy.

When we look at graduate compensation the way we look at that is how we pay the university and how they pay us and how our contracts are structured.

When it comes to student service it looks at like what we are actually receiving.

So when you look -- so we pay a health fee, when we pay the fee, you look at the -- you're a part of the comprehension -- excuse me, the compensation task force.

But when you go to counseling and you're trying to evaluate is counseling doing a great job or whatever it may be, then you're a part of student students.

Does that clear things up?

>> Yeah.

It's exactly what I thought.

There's going to be some place where we are going to have to outreach to other areas to be able to come to resolution or even close to a resolution.

Okay, thank you.

>> Hi, Maruf, I would like to make a comment.

>> Sure.

>> I'm not sure if we have another assembly for representatives in Virginia Tech, do we have?

>> We do.

>> So right now I'm taking two classes and because of the COVID-19, all of classes are mostly from Zoom and when I open my, you know, lab with Zoom, I see 79 in my class last class unhappy faces and undermotivated undergraduates and breaks my heart.

What I want to see is I want them to be happy as well in the following months because I understand being in a university, a lot of high expectations and they cannot even get out of the dormitories and housings, so this is also something that I would like to see like I really want them to be happier in their classes and labs but I don't know how we are going to make it happen because, you know, like it is hard, so just a small comment over there because I'm right now a lot of undergraduates are on me.

I'm from Turkey.

I actually visited those dining rooms and I couldn't see actually what was the reason behind it for the off campuses not to get inside the dining rooms, so there are a lot of problems for them as well, so hopefully we will make it, you know, like this term, better motivated for them as well.

That's also my fault, thank you.

>> Thank you.

And I would also like to put in a plug that I think with certain members of undergraduate student governments I think we have a good working relationship so I can definitely try to pass that message along.

>> That would be great because most of my, you know, like right now around my students who are undergrads, they are unhappy being, you know, all out for dining services because this is one of the places they were really enjoying as buffet, open buffet.

They were really happy about it.

Right now they feel bad since they cannot enter it anymore.

So it's one of the motivation they were having.



I understand it's COVID-19 and we cannot -- you need to have certain amount of people inside, but I don't know, like it could be, you know, certain amount could be just -- how would you say?

Like counting them if someone gets out, then the others can get in.

I don't know if we can do such a thing as well.

So if you can just convey information to assembly that would be great.

I see that they -- this is the demotivating them.

It's one of the issues now.

>> Thank you.

>> I'm going answer the question that was in the chat.

So I've only reached out to businesses and there's a lot of them and there's only one of me.

I think I am going to call to all of you for your aid if there's businesses that you would like to partner with us and to get discounts from, let me know, so you can e-mail GSA or you can e-mail me directly I'm jaj@vaedu.

That's a lot easier to get partnerships through that.

I know there's people who like to go to African co-op shops.

I don't have relationships with the stores.

If you know places that graduate students shop and we can build something with, please let me know and we can come up with official ask from them and a letter from you.

And the other question I wanted to ask was about -- okay, so we have interest in creating an open letter signed by graduate students but also people in the greater community around campus, faculty, assistant professors, adjuncts, pretty much anybody who is willing to put their neck out and say, hey, we support graduate students, compensate better, protect them and I'm curious about if you all are open to that, to creating an open letter so that we can all kind of put our voices behind our needs.

So I don't know if anybody had any thoughts about that.

>> So there's less than a minute left on this.

It's 7:00 p.m., we are officially over time.

I'm happy to stay around a bit more and chat about this and other things if you guys wish.

A final question that I have that might ask that may -- a lot of guys can stay, stay for this meeting as what fears do you have about COVID and the environment right now in addition to June's question?

Letter is good.

>> Can anybody put a thumbs up if they're cool with an open letter?

>> Can I make a quick comment over concerns of COVID response while people are putting their thumbs up?

In conference earlier today there were comments that he gave us.

He talked a lot about COVID plan, doing a good job protecting people and the main example he gave is the student population is relatively separate from faculty or community populations.

But what he never mentioned was vulnerable members among the students.

He sort of pretended as though the students were the protected group because they're within the 18 to 25 range.

That doesn't include graduate students like me who is slightly older than that, B, the more pressing issue it doesn't include disabled students especially since things he said in earlier press conference that he was listening to the disability community on campus and that turned out to not necessarily be true.

He hasn't taken any of the disability alliance recommendations and seems to have forgotten about disabled under graduate students in the pandemic.

I'm just really mad about that.

>> Before we continue with that, I'd like to official adjourn the meeting and then I'm happy to stay afterwards and fill whatever questions and comments that are there, so motion to adjourn.

>> Second.

>> Great.

Motion, okay, I have a second before an actual motion, but yeah.

>> Yes.

>> Great.

We've got a yes and we will call the meeting over.

I'm happy to stay on and talk about COVID.

>> I'm sorry, I have to leave right now but, you know, one thing that the reason that I'm here is because I like to see a bill reached and so anything that helps that, it would be great and when we get together, I will talk to you about that but I just want to make sure that's always kind of like present when writing up a letter and looking for businesses that want to partner with students, you know, Virginia graduates and Virginia tech graduates students should have some benefits that -- that they can enjoy in every campus if they need to be -- if they need to go from one to the next, so that's just a quick comment.

>> Okay.

I guess we have to vote on closing this meeting, sorry about the whole technicalities of this.

Can I get a thumbs up for officially adjourning the meeting?

>> Okay.

I'm going to raise my hand.

>> Or raise great.

I feel like that's everyone, so -- Roberts rules.

Thanks for your comments.

Meeting is officially adjourned and thanks for your comments.

We will be considering in campus Ron oak and around common wealth.

>> Thank you.

If I may very quickly I want to say thank you to our substitute captioner who had had to jump in because our original captioner had to deal with a tornado going in the area.

Thank you, thank you and why I don't let you take a break and we will see you captioner next time.

(Ended 7:06 p.m.)

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