

REALTIME FILE

GSAVT

General Assembly-(Zoom)

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Sharon: Everybody, as we are coming and please if you would put your name, your organization that you are representing and if you are a guest in the chat box, and the person whose name is presenter on the screen please change your name to your actual name because of security issues we do not let anonymous people stay in the meeting. Sorry.

>> Hey Sharon that is my presenting screen.

Sharon: what? that is your presenting screen? I just don't want to have weirdness again. Once is enough.

>> That's just me because I'm working on a different computer on that one.

Sharon: okay perfect thank you. Okay back to the 60s music. [Laughter]. All right enough happy 60s music. Rick I'm going to turn it over to you and whenever you want to get going based on the number of people... We have not hit quorum yet I realize. But

>> Well I guess question one, do we have quorum?

>> No we don't. And share and I'm keeping track of quorum on an external form. So... I will let you know when that is in but we are still four short of quorum.

Maruf: I believe the option open I feel like this is breaking rules a little but I feel like since the first 15 minutes our open forum we can start with that at least and once the actual meeting starts 15 minutes after we can ask again for quorum. All right. So with that, here is our agenda and open forum, let's begin. Whatever, this is your time whatever you guys want to chat about.

>> Happy grad students living the grad school dream. [Laughter]

[indiscernible]

>> Could be worse. Today was kind of, the morning I had a bunch of assorted meetings and teaching and homework and great homework and all this junk. But it wasn't a bad day. So I guess I wanted to ask because the first item on the docket was to elect a parliamentarian, I was wondering if anyone else was trying to run for parliamentarian?

>> I think you were the only one that gave me a cell phone mention.

>> Okay.

>> I didn't receive any other names.

>> Okay cool because like I said I will be willing to if there's no one else willing and able... Yeah. So. But of course we will have the vote at the beginning so.

>> I mean if no one has any interest to bring into the open forum we can move on to the open forum to the end because we have Coram now. So we can move on to the rest of the agenda.

Maruf: all right I will give maybe another three minutes. Let's start at five 35 for any less people coming and we will start the official agenda if no one brings up additional concerns.

>> Can I bring up a quick question? This is Tommy by the way. So I am on the parking and whatever TPC... And apparently there was a thing with the evening parking pass, prices been reduced by 50% and I found out the same time as everyone else. Was this your guys's work or was this also black magic?

Maruf: yes this was also our work

>> Then what a surprise.

>> Yeah I was going to update about that later on but it is unfortunate that our representative in the committee did not know that this was actually covered [indiscernible] but there is an update on that. I'm just going to add to shared governance because that is what it is supposed to do but if Maruf wants to give details on that quickly you can do that

Maruf: I don't really wish to talk about parking anymore than I have to [laughter]... But this was basically a lot of senior administrators actually listening to graduate students and students as well. And so I think it is a small gesture that they are willing to listen to what we are saying and they are open to suggestions as well. I realize this is not a perfect answer to everything but I think it is... With more than everything that has happened it's a very happy compromise.

>> I have one comment. So I am about to bring up, I'm sorry my name is Brandon I'm representing the philosophy department. I'm abroad to bring up something we hate

talking about even more than parking. Student fees. And obviously there's not much we can do about getting those lessons it seems like even though a lot of services are not being fulfilled given Covid. However, there was this opportunity that came up I believe two GSA meetings ago where we were reminded that if you are a completely virtual student you can request to the bursar's office an extra \$300 refund and I pursued that as a virtual student. However I'm sure a lot of you folks have in these graduate programs there are these extra research and thesis components, things that are not requiring you to be in person or in class. But those are coded as in person. So anyone who falls under that umbrella cannot receive the extra \$300 refund. You might be aware of that but I thought I would bring it up

>> So any graduate student who has research credit that almost sounds like the vast majority of research students that would apply to is what you're saying

>> Yeah I pointed that out I was like hey all of the things, I'm not physically on campus I'm not even in the state. I won't be and they said well for X reason XYZ reason [indiscernible] code research and thesis and project report at least in my department as an in person thing. So it really just is a bureaucratic barrier that doesn't really make much sense.

Maruf: so this has been on our radar for quite some time now. We have been trying to advocate for this... At least for two months, it is October yah ... It is October month. And so we did speak from individuals from the bursar's office. Got quite a lot of non-answers out of them I think is a fair way of categorizing everything. We will keep trying to push for this. I have taken this up to the [indiscernible] Provost as well and I can't promise anything all I will promises that I will keep speaking for you guys but it doesn't seem to be going anywhere at this moment.

>> That's okay I appreciate it. Like I said I figured you folks were aware but I wanted to mention it.

>> Oh Brandon I think the one thing that we spoke to the bursar's office about, and I'm not sure if this is also what Maruf spoke to the present about with the whole 50 mile restriction so you have to meet fully virtually and be more than 50 miles. I don't assume there's any state 50 miles [out of here] so you have to check the box. So for your case that is very interesting because it's registered online have you tried contacting the graduate school about this? I'm not sure if [indiscernible]

>> Yeah the bursar's response to me seemed unequivocal. And I did not pursue it any further.

>> No, I think you should I think the Dean is not here because if she was here she would have jumped into this. But I think the issue is for most of us who are within the Blacksburg and Roanoke area who do not satisfy the 50 mile radius, that is the issue and that is the issue we talked to them about because once you are outside that, the bursar's office, their job is not to give money away. So I think they're just doing the job

[saying this is not going to] work but I think you should if the Dean is here later you should ask the question directly but if there are fully virtual and more than 50 miles away from the Blacksburg campus they should be receiving the \$30 back

>> I'm sorry, that will apply for the northern Virginia students as well?

Maruf: No northern, because people in northern Virginia have a completely different structure compared to Blacksburg and Roanoke and Dean DePaul is on the line. I'm not sure if you want to comments Dean DePauw

>> I will jump in a little bit, what Martina wrote is about and yes I was think she was right it is written as an and logic. And it really should be in my view the 50 miles because for some people it would be listed as 100% virtual. But the research credits... Are essentially virtual even though they are not classified as such. And I don't think they should be classified as such. For other reasons. And actually Monika is on a committee and I hope we are working on getting this all resolved because we can have people with 100% virtual and living in Blacksburg who probably according to the logic we have right now should not be able to get that, the refund but for those of you who are not living in Blacksburg, then that is when I would be supportive of some kind of an exception. But we are trying to solve the bigger issue of how students are classified. Kypatia to your comment about fees essentially northern Virginia you do not pay the same fees that are paid in Blacksburg. I think you have one technology fee. So that's why doesn't apply to anybody who is not on the Roanoke or Blacksburg campus.

>> I thought that we paid a lab fee too, but I don't have the stuff in front of me right now. I will take a look at it.

>> Yeah and lab fees and college identified fees, those cannot be waived. What this topic is all about is the comprehensive fees which cover things like transportation, parking, rec sports etc. and you don't pay that up in Northern Virginia.

>> Okay

>> we will keep working on this. We have to get the logic right. We have to get the principles right and I also sense that there is not much willingness to make changes right now but Brandon if you want to send me a note, we can communicate and I can see if an exception could be granted.

>> Okay will do. And there is, I have a very small department of 10 or so students and there's at least three or four of us that fit this description. So.

>> And put all the names in the email.

>> Okay will do.

Maruf: thank you all. I feel like we only have three minutes left for the open forum so we will just finish out for three minutes and continue on with our agenda.

>> Hey this is Jack. Can I ask a quick question to see if anybody might know the answer?

Maruf: sure.

>> So I've been looking at the Covid dashboard and the new metrics of recovery and I have some concerns and questions. This is not accusatory toward Eugene DePauw, I was hoping you might be in the rooms in some where some of the decisions are made or some of the other committee might be because I'm confused about two things one is why we have an estimated recovery metric when the jury is still out on long-term Covid effects on the body, and the second is I'm curious about the gap between recovery plus quarantine, because that seems like it should... People total tests, but it is off by like 250. Or... Only anyways yeah. It's off by a significant number.

>> You are right that I'm sometimes in the room when I feel like Hamilton in the room where it happens. But not all of the details are shared with us, Jack. And I know we have had several conversations. I think that would be a very good question to ask Mike [indiscernible] seriously. He is pretty good at helping to explain what they are going on, on how the data are calculated and then reported. And one other comment about the long-term effects.

I think people acknowledge that we do not know what the long-term effects are, but I will say I have heard that acknowledged and I think we all know that and when I'm in the room and outside of the room it is very difficult to capture that in a way that provides meaningful data. We don't have the data.

>> Yeah and I appreciate that, and I know it is sort of an unfair question. So I will definitely reach out to Mike--- I think my concern is I agree with you completely and I worry that recovery is misleading because we don't have it. And I worry that maybe not having any data that expresses long-term consequences without knowing would be better but I will definitely follow up with Mike [indiscernible]

>> And Jack, we don't have any data about the long-term effects.

>> Yeah, for sure.

>> So that'll probably be the response.

>> Yeah I recognize that. But then presenting it as though this is a full recovery might be misleading.

>> Yeah well, share it with him and maybe there's a better word.

Maruf: All right I would like to move on with our agenda. So first thing I guess, the question we have Coram before we begin? great let's begin. So election a parliamentarian we have a nomination for Aiden Murphy do we have any other candidates that would like to run against Aiden? great. I will take the silence and lack of

chat as no additional nominations. So I guess we have a motion to vote. Do I have a motion to vote?

>> To vote

Maruf: do I have a second?

>> Second.

Maruf: can we get a thumbs up or clapping hands whatever? for voting for him? great my screen is filled with thumbs. So congratulations Aiden. You are now a parliamentarian and I think I will kind of turn this over to you. Will no actually because we have to confer delegates now. And I think... Well I will give this to a condo between you and Awad. I'm not sure how you want to handle it.

>> Just for everyone's information when we have shared governance representatives who are not GSA delegates may have the option of confirming them as delegates as well so that's why we are doing this because then delegates also get voting privileges in the GSA Gen. assembly so it gives us more people in [our more or less] delegates will for voting and quorum. And so that being said those are the people, those are the folks who are not departmental program delegates at this point. Specific committees. And we just need a motion to confirm

Maruf: we have a point of order in the chat. Execs should not be... Exact numbers should not be delegates at large

>> this is true the executive and executive committee don't serve the delegate position particular for the voting rolls.

Awad: yes I have taken all delegates and I forgot to take Sharon. So that is a fault on my part. So this is definitely for everyone else except Sharon. We still love you.

[Laughter]

Maruf: so quick clarifying question do we have someone on the graduate curriculum committee?

Awad: yes but she can't be confirmed as a delegate. That's why I took out the exact, but I [indiscernible] my bad.

Sharon: I am willing if someone, a delegate would like to sit on the graduate curriculum committee in my place I am willing to step aside for that.

Awad: you don't need to step aside you're just not going to be confirmed as a delegate as large. There's nothing preventing you from remaining there. So I will definitely append this to the meetings, but we need to all confirm the delegates except for Sharon Stidham. So exec also [indiscernible] motion so someone needs to do that.

>> I moved to approve the... List of committee counsel appropriations nominations whatever it is

>> is there a second to the motion?

>> I second it.

>> So we will have I think if Maruf can view everyone thumbs again as to whether or not delegates will be confirmed then that will probably be best. Just because that was successful once. In terms of voting procedure.

Maruf: sure thing. There is a polling feature. Excellent suggestion [indiscernible] we will do that next vote. That is not seem to be a lot of thumbs this time around.

Awad: there were [indiscernible] pretty much everyone had thumbs up.

Maruf: I think we are good.

>> In that case the delegates are confirmed.

Maruf: all right congratulations. Resolutions.. It was my understanding that, and Awad can clarify that no comments were provided on the resolutions above. And if that is true we are waiting our right to comment and that is what I have to respond with this evening.

>> Can I ask a question? well to questions I guess. So first, are we, we are not like, we are just commenting on the seas are going through the conviction system --- not saying that we approve or disapprove correct? So one question I have and this may be more appropriate in the governance committee because to my knowledge no one from the research committee is here, but on the policy regarding the creation of a database for professors to upload the research, I was wondering if anyone could elaborate on that a little bit more or talk about, so I read that it has gone through like three years of this process and there's been like a task force created for it. But it seemed like a big deal that we were creating a database for all professors to upload the research once it has been peer-reviewed and stuff so I wonder if anybody know anything about that.

Awad: I think that was in the IP part that was attached to it, intellectual property. I do not see the rep on the committee there but at the rep on the commission of research is here so if there's any information on that on the commission of research [indiscernible]. They are saying there is no information on that either.

>> Okay I might, whoever is the rep, or if anybody knows who maybe I could reach out to to ask that, I would potentially like to get more information on it so we can cut it off in governance if there were concerns or what not.

>> So I guess my question right now would be are you suggesting that we table to vote on this until the next meeting or is this just an informal like I would like to know more about it?

>> So my understanding, I don't know which one of you may know this, but I know there's a general timeline when we are allowed to comment. I'm assuming that that would be probably gone before our next meeting came around because generally it is

like two weeks I think. So I mean if we do not waive our right to comment it is essentially already waived so I'm not necessarily, I just want to make sure we get the right information.

>> Yeah and I'm not sure personally about the external whatever external timelines there are. With these.

Maruf: I think a number two, that one is due tonight. That one if I'm not mistaken that is the climate change one. Or climate action policy one. That one is due tonight but the others I think we have a little bit of time. But it's going to be definitely before next assembly meeting.

>> Can I ask a quick question about the climate resolution policy? I have a conflict of interest because I was one of the authors, but I was wondering if we could add a big we would like the direction the university is going with this as a comment am I allowed to make that as a conflict of interest

>> In that case I would be happy to make that comment because I actually tried to read the document I got 80 pages and and it was just a bit too much. So I really liked the general direction of the document and I mean the, comprehensiveness especially with respect to giving kind of multiple possible tracks for some of those goals. So yeah. A big thumbs up from me.

Maruf: sure thing than the official comment will be we appreciate the direction that the University is headed in. Regarding climate action. My mistake. It's actually number one that is due tonight. The other two we have a little bit of time and we can hold off on that. I think not by too much but I would say maximum of a week if you guys wish to provide additional feedback on that.

>> Who sent us that to review? I mean I guess it came from April. Do we have a contact on the research committee? Other than the rep?

Awad: so April sends it to Maruf, I send it to the delegates and when we have comment from the delegates I send that to the commission sure if need be. But basically you can get access to both if you have comments on that but definitely our rep would be the first point of contact.

>> I think we have to vote on comments Maruf.

Maruf: yes we will be voting on comments. Regarding resolution number one this is the comments regarding the climate action policy change. The comment will be, we appreciate the direction the university is going in. Can I get a motion to approve this comment?

>> Sure.

>> So moved

Maruf: second... And thumbs up. Great. We got a lot of thumbs on that one. Alright and regarding, I'm not exactly sure how you guys would wish to proceed with resolutions two and three. We can hold it off by a little bit of time. Kase, I understand you had a question about the open access policy. Would you like us to investigate further on this before we make an official waving right or actual comments?

>> Yeah I don't have, not the second one, but the one on research with the open access to the professors.

[Indiscernible]

>>... Would move to table the third resolution but the second one is fine.

Maruf: okay so let's handle business for the second one. Do we have a motion to waive our right to comment on resolution number two?

>> Sure.

Maruf: great. Do we have a second?

>> I will second.

Maruf: and thumbs up? Great. Excellent. And a motion to table resolution number three?

>> So moved.

>> Second.

Maruf: excellent thumbs up again? One last time for now? Excellent great. I'm just going to move on. I think we are done with resolutions for today. Going on I will turn this over to Awad.

Awad: okay so this is just a quick heads up to everyone. I was going to talk about it in detail but I did not want to throw our going green standing committee under the bus on this, but Jack's update kind of hinted that he did want people to get involved with this as well so I will wait for him to give information on that and send an email out. I will make sure to send information to everyone but the green RFP program is one from the office of sustainability and what they do is take ideas from recognized student organizations basically. So people here can happily represent the GSA, and that's what I would like us to do I would like to see the GSA take action and more of those things happening on campus but it can also be a student organization from your department if you do have a registered student organization. That is the key. And basically the program funds any kind of projects that you would write about a two or three page proposal. I would be very happy to help with this. I have written two of those before. It is a good proposal writing practice as long as the proposal fits into the climate action plan goals it will be funded. The funding is usually very generous. I think the average is like \$12,000. 25 I think is the biggest or 32 maybe that was awarded. So other than that it is a good way for people to do something. Leave an impact on campus. I think it also puts the grad

students out there because those things are usually just taken by undergrads and they kind of have to force their way into the ecosystem that is designed by undergrads. So this is just a heads up because the proposals are due on November 20 I guess this year. So there will be plenty of time. You can email GSA [indiscernible] if you want to get involved and once Jack gets more information I will send it out to everyone but I assume Jack, you're happy if I throw the going green standing committee under the bus on this one?

>> That's fine and in fact if you have, they might have posted the charge from the upper administration on the website already so if that is already posted that the only thing I was waiting on. That's, I was just notified they has sent it out yet

Awad: that is posted and as usual the winning proposals from previous years are posted if people want to look at how it looks and I would like people to do it on behalf of the GSA but people also want to do this in the departments please do so, let people know that graduate students are part of the student body of the campus. We just want to make that clear.

Maruf: thank you Awad. Exec board updates Awad it's actually up to you

Awad: first things first with resolutions the floor resolutions that we had I really think that usually we go through or that is what we did last year we went to the resolutions here. I think that is not the best use of our time. And so generally delegates should expect me to email them the resolutions. If you have any comments or anything that you want I think it's also much more useful when I redirect those to the representatives or the commission committee counsel chairs, whatever the question might be about, so generally I think that's how we're going to move about the resolutions. When we need to vote if there's no Gen. assembly coming up or even if there's plenty of resolutions for general assembly we will do the electronic vote. I think it was pretty good for the United feminist movement letter that we endorsed. FYI we endorsed that unanimously so thanks everyone for that. [Indiscernible].

Regarding the evening parking policy update, this is the question that Tommy asked about earlier so this was not the shared governance work which is kind of sad that things like that are not taking place in shared governance. But basically after our meeting with the parking director, before the school year started when they implemented the evening pass we were not pleased about how they handled it. We reached out to their boss and their boss reached out to us last week telling us that we like you guys so we are giving a 50% [indiscernible]. Not the best way to do things but generally the bottom line of this I think people were asking earlier about it, the evening pass has moved from \$50 a semester to \$25 a semester. And what happens to that is if you have purchased the evening parking pass you will get a refund. Some people purchase for a year there will get a refund and some people purchase for one semester they get asked if they want to [indiscernible] for the fall, so that's pretty much it. There's no specific updates from the representatives on specific committees or commissions

just because those just started meeting but generally if there are any specific updates I will make sure to share them with everyone here in the next meetings. So that is it for me.

Maruf: thank you Tahsin, do you have updates?

>> I do in terms of finance we are currently working with the graduate [didn't budge aboard] [indiscernible] at this point what we are doing is setting up different policy specifically for graduate students that should be included in the student budget board. For one of the updates is we have a chairman for the finance committee who [indiscernible] we have one opening left who will primarily be helping us with the communication notes and organizing new documents for the graduate student policy [indiscernible]. I would recommend anyone who is interested in [indiscernible] who has experience with both finance and understanding the different policy postures would come up and maybe send me an email. And send an email in the chat box and please let me know if you're interested in working in this committee. The good thing is that work is already in progress. It's very positive right now and we are hopefully going to be able to get the graduate student budget first.

Maruf: I strongly encourage someone to work on this committee with us [indiscernible]. Somewhere that myself and prior student leaders, prior graduate student leaders have been really working on for quite some time. And putting a football reference, we are at the 10 yard line, so this is a very easy win that I see coming our way this year so please do help out.

>> So I have seen Alexis has some interesting and she was a former exec board members Alexis I would be pleased if you are part of the committee and keep us going with this.

Maruf: we are about to score, Tommy.

[Laughter]

Maruf: all right thank you. Events. June. Is June on the call? Okay Sharon.

Sharon: sorry I had myself muted. For those of you who are presenters or know people who were presenters in the past semesters graduate student assembly research symposium the T-shirts and cups are finally in my apartment instead of the now graduated cochair. So if you were a presenter please contact me. I'm on campus two days a week right now. And so I have a sign-up sheet for that. And if you are on a committee or those of you who are running the committees and subcommittees could you either send me minutes or updates so I can add those to the website because we do say in the Constitution that we will do so.

Maruf: thank you Sharon. Programs, Martina?

Martina: good evening. Since we last met, we have had the program chairs hired. There will be updates later in October regarding the programs opening up specifically

thinking about TF P, the travel fund program and as always we will be looking for volunteers to serve as reviewers for submissions to help fund raising and to brainstorm ideas around what theme research symposium should be. I do want to point out that we have three email addresses, one for each of the three named programs, so TF P, travel fund program G RDP, the graduate research development program and the research symposium and exhibition all have separate email addresses listed on the website. They currently also go to me but they are separated out by topic to help keep track of anything. And the chairs will shortly be working on updates and revisions to these different programs and they will start to be the ones transitioning into answering all the email questions about when will submissions be open. So thank you.

Maruf: all right thank you Martina. And Sabrina do we have updates from the BoV

>> I do not.

Maruf: thank you Sabrina. All right moving on this is something we have new we have started this year. I called and task forces meeting one but then I was in so many taskforces I kind of got confused. So we have renamed them to subcommittees but the same exact agenda. And so four subcommittees and four chairs and each trying to tackle a different part of programs affecting life and so subcommittee number one is diversity and I will turn it over to Emily.

>> Hi everybody. They diversity subcommittee has met a couple of times now and we are collecting and reviewing diversity data various areas on campus. We are focusing on recruitment, student life and support systems and postgraduate outcomes for underrepresented minority graduate students. After we review all the data that we collect and we talk to different representatives we are going to come up with 3 to 5 short-term goals that we want to have in as soon as possible and long-term goals. Because we really want to promote diversity in a sustainable way that continues even after we leave us graduate students. And then at our last and Carolina Bell came from the United feminist movement and we are trying to support their work with a women's center and she wanted me to share that if any graduate students would like to help with interviewing for the open counseling position as a women's center you can send her an email. And I will put my email in the chaff and you can let me know if you want to email because I forgot to put it on the slide. And that is our update for now.

Maruf: thank you Emily. Moving straight on [indiscernible] capital planning we will move to Rebecca who is here I saw her somewhere.

>> Hi guys. My name is Becca. And I'm the chair of the grad comp capital planning committee and the goals are going to be gathering data primarily sort of a mistake cost of living analysis also data regarding stipends from, the goal is for Blacksburg Roanoke as well as the DC graduate students. And to synthesize that information into a form that is easily kind of digestible and advocate for graduate students, and essentially we are advocating for increased financial stability for graduate students. And this can take many forms including negotiating stipend amounts, more assistance with student fees and so

if you want to be a part of this committee I would love for some more input. My email and phone number are on the slide. And Maruf's comment yeah we were chatting the other day and really hopeful for admin who are sort of willing and ready to listen about sort of the financial situations of graduate students, not just Blacksburg but also Roanoke and DC campuses as well. So feel free to contact me if you want to be a part of this subcommittee. Planning on doing meetings every other Wednesday at 6 PM.

Maruf: thank you. And yes I would like to emphasize in the comments again really surprised that administrators are willing to listen to what we are saying. Like I kind of just ask Dr. [indiscernible] and he's like yes we can do that so I see a lot of potential in the subcommittee. So please do contact Becca if you're willing to help out. Student services. Do we have someone on the call from there?

>> Yes.

[Indiscernible]

>> All right so our plan basically is to gather as much information as we can and we have already started. We contacted the DC and Roanoke versions of the GSA and we are trying to see what is available at all the different campuses in sort of how that relates to the kind of fees that they have and what students they are wanting so we can best figure out what everyone needs at the different places and provided for them as such.

Maruf: thank you. And Jack for going green?

>> Sweet. So we sort of broke down what we are doing into three major questions in preparation for the meeting. The first is thinking about how we want to hold University accountable to the business plan laid out in the climate action commitment. So we are thinking of developing a one or two pager that we would expect to be produced from let's say the environment and sustainability committee that gives the kind of information that would be useful to have for the GSA and graduate students broadly we are thinking about developing some sort of climate accountability group that works as a liaison between undergrads and graduate students so there is some institutional memory there. So that is one thing. We are also investigating what graduate students want in terms of programming for sustainability week. It is pretty undergraduate centric. We are thinking of trying to expand that and the green RFP program might be a good way to do that although I have not brought it up to the group yet. And the third thing is thinking about how GSA can be leaders in terms of sustainability. I know it's a sort of broad category. A lot of the efforts are probably going to surround the climate action commitment and long-term successful implementation but this category is thinking about how can the GSA take a starring role and that is doing things like making sure that the conference we put on every year is 100% sustainable. And carbon neutral and those sorts of endeavors that we can take him pretty easily and successfully so that is what we are working on. If you're interested I will put my email in the chaff.

Maruf: thank you Jack. And the Dean said this a couple times there's a lot of data available within the graduate school. Feel free to reach out to them or myself and I can connect you with the correct individuals to get whatever data you need for the subcommittee that you are a part of.

Awad: one thing I just want to add before we move on regarding the last comment Jack made, so our director of events is actively looking, I mean, she wasn't able to attend today but that would probably be her update as well, she's actively looking at or us to buy carbon offsets for our events that includes the research symposium [indiscernible] Gen. assembly meetings if we ever go back to in person. So that is something that [indiscernible].

Maruf: thank you Awad. Standing committee updates. I feel like [indiscernible] has given the update unless you wish to add new things about the graduate student budget board

>> Yes I wanted to give some updates and [indiscernible] is not here is the chairman and

Maruf: first I would like to welcome our new member Alexis to the team as in the last meeting that we are actually rethinking funding for three major categories for graduate students, one is the graduate students [indiscernible] program and food funding for different meaning for graduate student organizations and at the same time

at this point what we are doing is actually looking at creating policy [indiscernible] grad student budget board including general profit shares and responsibility [indiscernible]. Once we get the approved monies from the student budget board basically it is our responsibility to decide on how we want to distribute it to different graduate student organizations. So at this point right now what we're looking at is scoping out how to define graduate student organizations because there's no official definition at this point and also we are looking at how we can distribute the different funds once we get it available from the budget board. I mean that's it from my end.

Maruf: all right. Thank you. Is the official body, the graduate... That is the name we have been colloquially saying I guess. But we don't have a name...

>> So you are essentially like the goal was to essentially separate out the graduate student fees into our own version of budget board is that correct?

Maruf: yes.

>> Would it still be housed within... I mean will it have the same advisors or just different everything basically?

Maruf: we are looking at completely different rules. Ultimately it will be housed within student affairs because of the nature of the fee itself. I mean yeah.

>> Thank you.

Maruf: and Jack, we can consider the money tree for the [satire people] once we get a little bit closer to finalizing everything. And internal affairs and judicial. This quick overview we are asking for a Constitution rewrite. So I will hand us over to Aiden.

>> Yes so the effort in trying to take a serious look at the Constitution and seeing whether or not parts of it can be approved, what we have decided to first do is to construct something of a mission statement I mean, there's nothing called a mission statement in the constitutional already buried at the end of page 2 and a number of paragraphs but a mission statement I think should be something that is memorable and succinct and so what we want to do before trying to craft such assistant broad statement is to just send out a survey to this assembly, the members of this assembly. At some point to, just to make sure that what we have thought are the main points of this assembly are actually shared. We don't want to, the three of us, five if you count Maruf and Awad to go forward making a bunch of changes to this Constitution... If that is not I guess with different ideas and the rest of the assembly has. Because members of this assembly I think will have and be the most impacted by any changes structurally to the Constitution on a day to day basis. So really short, too long, didn't listen is we're going to send out a survey at some point, real short. That will hopefully come sometime in the next week. That's all I got.

Maruf: thank you. And I would like to add a comment to the work you guys are doing. And provide some broader context as to what is happening at Virginia Tech. As you guys might be aware, shared governance overall is changing, is slowly changing and Virginia Tech. And especially the role students play. So I'm one of the graduate students that set on the future of student governance task force led by Frank shoe shock who is the vice president of student affairs and [Kim O'Rourke] was the director of policy and governance at Virginia Tech, and I personally feel that I think GSA can take charge as to how student governments structures can be a model for the rest of the University and I think the work done by the Constitution rewrite can be pivotal to how, the role that students play in governance at Virginia Tech. So I want to thank you guys for the work you're doing on the Constitution rewrite and I ask everyone else to definitely give whatever inputs they have because I think what we do can be long-lasting.

>> Thank you for that addition. That's really important

Maruf: task force it covering local [indiscernible] we are not there yet.

>> Oh we are definitely not there yet.

Maruf: we just started.

[Laughter]

>> I fully read the Constitution and the bylaws. And I have thought about them a nonzero amount enough to possibly send out a survey. So that is well not just myself but myself and others on the committee members.

Maruf: thank you.

>> That is where we are.

Maruf: No, thank you Aiden. And I'd like to transition to talking about the November assembly meeting which is on November 5. I'm planning on inviting unless everyone opposes here the student affairs leadership because I think historically this department has not served graduate students well and I see a change of leadership there that is almost a complete 180 of everything that happened before and I would like for them to build strong ties with the GSA. We will be inviting Dr. Frank [Shushock] and there and he is and Heather Wagner and I think a quick footnote on James Bridge fourth. He was hired less than a month ago. And I don't even think he is like officially in Blacksburg yet. So I'm pretty sure he will be here soon and I think we should give him a warm welcome. So we will reach out to them pending... Oh, he starts in two weeks thanks Scott. So I assume he will be here, pending availability I will invite them for the November assembly meeting. All right. Yet

>> do we have anything like special other than the fact that they are like coming to be a part of the meeting like is there any special agenda items or anything we are going to discuss with them?

Maruf: so this student affairs controls... Pretty much everything nonacademic or at least in my opinion everything nonacademic at the University. So whether you look at co-counseling, wellness, Dean of students office, there's a lot of things for students in need. And so if you wish to discuss any of those topics and the list actually goes on a lot longer than what I said if you wish to discuss any of those topics I recommend you bring it up to them.

So I think I'm going to structure it is kind of an open forum, a 20 minute open forum with them or maybe longer depending on what our agenda actually looks like in November. But really just open forum with them. They have expressed interest in coming and casual comments to me so I think November will be a good time for them to come. And even like the graduate student budget board is controlled by student affairs. So you can bring this up at the thing.

Okay so this, I'm expecting a little bit of beefy conversation from everyone here regarding Spring 2021. So at this moment in time Virginia Tech has not made any official plan as to what spring is going to look like. I would like to kind of take a step in advance and I don't want to say dictate how spring is going to be but provide suggestions to administrators as to how spring 2021 is going to look like not only for us but for everyone.

So the goal is by the middle of next week to have an open letter signed by GSA, so you the delegates, BoV rep Sabrina and the executive board with suggestions. The topics that I would like to include in this letter is when and how do we open, what time do we

open, is there a spring break, and of course what is most important to us responsibility's of the GRA GTAs and whoever else we define ourselves at this university.

This I would like to work on this very quickly because I think a decision is going to be made very soon and I would like to get everyone's input in before the decision is made. I am not a betting person but I would bet that by October 15 something is going to come out. So I would like to reach to the president Provost and other administrators well before October 15th. So the quick timeline that we have is please provide your suggestions, we will go through this and somewhat of an open discussion forum. We will draft a letter by October 5, Awad will send this out to you guys by October... Like on October 5th excuse me and I'm expecting a 48 hour turnaround with up or down vote. And then I will send it to the [Provost] and others. So topic number one, when and how do we open? And this is like nothing has been set on this. So it's kind of very open forum. Dean DePauw, I will send it to you and the Provost.

Awad: we have a question in the chat.

Maruf: sure. Dean?

>> Yeah I was just going to answer the question about what is coming relative to, or what was sent out to many of us about the format of the classes I think it is next week that each of us who are teaching a course will be asked what is our preferred modality, face to face, hybrid online, synchronous online, asynchronous. That is... That is I think very important to get a feel for what it is that the faculty are wanting to do. So that is not necessarily influencing a decision, or should be read as a decision about spring. Because I can tell you we are in discussions but there's no official plans yet. But I think it is a good thing to get an idea of how the faculty want to offer their courses. Do you have questions about the?

>> I wasn't that sent to instructors a record, grad students?

>> It probably, it hasn't gone out yet Jack good question. That memo was sent to generally from the Provost, and I don't know who all gets it. I get about two or three copies because I'm on all these lists. But it is the registrar's office that is going to be sending it out. Now even if you are an instructor of record as a grad student, there still needs to be the departmental commitment to that. So it is not excluding you. It's just making sure that the departments and programs have that ultima

-- ultimate responsibility are you an instructor of record Jack?

>> I'm not entirely sure. I haven't got my assignment for spring. My department is a little slow.

>> Well keep me in the loop. I will try to look for those kinds of things because it's really important for those of you who are serving as instructor of records and those serving as GTAs, not to work, to comment, to talk with your faculty members if you know what your assignment is for spring. And as you all know, this is fluid. Because we, faculty are able

to change how it is that they would be offering the courses. This is just the first step into figuring out what faculty and departments are wanting to do. Okay?

Maruf: all right. Alright so it is kind of open floor. When and how do we open? Should we open right on time, which is like January 22 or something like that in terms of fully in person... Should we have a delayed opening which is starting like two or three weeks after.

>> So is there, I'm not sure because I haven't looked at things, data but is there a significant difference between opening and opening later? That anyone knows of?

>> It would depend on the sort of comorbid factors like whether or not students are moving back in. So the idea is that if you open later but you let students move onto campus or into the area sooner after the holiday break there is more of a gap that you can quarantine and effectively detect cases but that sort of is contingent on the degree to which the campus is remote, the migration patterns of students and other epidemiological factors.

>> Yeah that makes sense. Because with that, if there's a significant benefit that could be a good thing to do but also simply put I do not, I hate messing with the undergrads purposely or not. In teaching calculus for myself this semester I am choosing not to do some optional quizzes that I could have. Because the students already have enough on their plate. Along the same vein I would hate to make unnecessary changes that are only going to further just stress of students. So that is why I ask the question.

[Several voices]

>> I was just going to say I was going to address Becca's question in the chat if we know if VT is going to take any measures is to discourage off-campus violations. I had a student asked this and I brought this up in the commission of student affairs meeting last time with Dr. [Shushock] to my understanding do not quote me on the numbers but there have been approximately 40 students suspended and like five dozen housing contracts revoked for people violating the social distancing and gathering in different things. So I do know that they are indeed enforcing these when they can catch it.

>> Yeah I guess I like understand that and I know obviously like there are only so many resources to go around and stuff in monitoring these things but like I drive down like Roanoke Street or Main Street and just see whether it is on the weekends or Friday night and just see the crowds and crowds of people either at parties or outside of houses and stuff and like I know for me personally like GTA lab session for kids and I only see them in person a few times a month. But like you never know, I just feel like maybe this is more of a personal opinion but I just like not enough is being done to vocalize that congregating and having parties and other social gatherings is not the best idea right now. And I think the University has to be a lot more explicit about that. Especially coming from someone who like is a virology didn't and just sort of knowing the science behind what is happening and everything it makes me really concerned.

Maruf: I would like to state Emily Burns comment by voting that GTA should have the agency to decide whether or not they wish to work remotely.

>> If I could expand on that, I also would like to add that I think remote work should be the default. I think the sort of wishy-washy freedom of individual choice thing that the upper admin have done is going to get people killed and I think it should be very very clear that our stance is that remote work should be the default unless we absolutely cannot do it. And I think absolutely GTAs especially GTAs who might have pre-existing vulnerabilities or are immunocompromised, might live with people who are immunocompromised, the sorts of factors I think they should be empowered to have the absolute right to be remote.

>> I know at least for the class that I GTA for, because we have to go in person for exams, we try to bring that up and the option was not given to us. Like that was just not an option for us and that made me really concerned because I have a lab mate who has a family member who is immunocompromised. My advisor has two immunocompromised family members. And the option of doing like, proctoring the tests remotely, that was not an option given to us.

>> That is absurd because there's absolutely no reason anybody should be taking a test in person right now. That is such an extravagance. And I 100% agree and this is something I should mention that the disability alliance and caucus has raised which is comprised of both graduate students and faculty and staff, to the upper ministration and they have refused, might just full stop said they wanted to be a matter of individual freedom so I'm suggesting we take a clear stance and say remote by default should be the norm and graduate students should have a right to declare that and so I appreciate the testimony.

>> And Maruf, if I can just jump in here, because you all can write what Jack, what you have just said. In the principles of the grad school has put out you have that right and we stand by that. And if there are situations where you are not given a choice then you can contact me. And I have... I have been in conversations with some individuals about that.

>> In that case I would like to reframe mine as simply want to express this should be the policy across the University and should be more widely publicized I think because I think the issue is that it's not this top-down mandate coming from the president. It has to come from the graduate school. It has to come from agreements between faculty or staff and supervisors and it really should be unequivocally from the top down but I

do appreciate that the graduate school is taking the graduate school is taking the stance and defense of graduate students so I want to revise the comment to say we support this and we wanted to be more widely known and spread among other the upper levels of governance.

Maruf: I think we can do that. To further add a comment, I think for small adding to what Tommy said that the policy is if you wish to be remote, the professor instructor would have to accommodate that. I think that is true. In the case where that is not happening I think GSA could step in and facilitate conversation with faculty. I think that is something I would like to include in the letter.

>> I think to add on to Jack's comment, I think it might be important to have it be that he felt that you are working remotely. Because I know in my department there were students who wanted to work remotely but that was not the default. And to achieve that desire they would have to alienate that relationship with the faculty they would otherwise need to be on their side and have a positive image. Of them.

>> Yeah I was thinking the exact same thing. Like [indiscernible] really supportive of all of us as graduate students but on the flipside we all need to have a positive relationship with our supervisors so it's a really tricky dynamic to navigate.

Maruf: I would like to shift the topic just a bit. Spring break. Various universities have canceled spring break. Where, or does it even matter to us? should we do something about it?

Awad: I was going to say our letter should say that we are not having it.

Maruf: well exactly what is spring break

Awad: because I really other than what is spring break jokes aside about us the grad students, but I think early start early finish of the semester, I don't think there's solid science to support whether we should start early or late or finish early or late but something that is happening like spring break even though it is [indiscernible] going to specific destinations and coming back. So it just makes no sense. I'm not sure if a lot of people agree with that. Maybe a lot of people

do need the break within the middle of the semester that they would not want us to cancel or advocate for saying no spring break but I think that it is something that a lot of universities that do not have plans have said that their only plan for spring so far is that there is no spring break. It just makes sense. I think it's helpful, I hope all this disappears miraculously by March but I don't think that is going to happen because we have been wishing that for seven or eight months now.

That's not the case obviously.

>> I would... I agree and I think that it is the general trend that we are seeing across the board with other universities. But we have to be mindful of the mental health of not only the undergraduate students it also ourselves that use the spring break is a moment to catch up on our dissertation, on our grading and other elements of that. So if we are going to propose forgoing spring break we need to have alternatives in mind to suggest the same hand.

It can't just be this constant, cancel this cancel that per the undergraduate students are going to be very unreceptive and personally I'm pretty unreceptive to getting rid of the week or I have maybe one week where work is not being piled on top of me. Directly. So, I think if we are going to come with this proposal we need to also shoe in okay no spring break but we are extending winter break or shortening the semester by X amount of time

oor weeks so the people have something of good news to be carried along with all of the horrible news.

Awad: yeah definitely and that's what I meant by, I thought it would be something that is very difficult to say [indiscernible] because again even if we are not traveling we do benefit from it. So how would folks like that to be worded, or how should we go about something like that?

>> Is there any way that we can sort of do like how fall break is, maybe an extended long weekend and maybe we have a few more of those? Is that a potential option? or am I being too hopeful or naïve?

>> If I could, I have a sort of elaboration on that. Right now they are considering for the remainder of fall to basically kill the break but add an additional data the weekend so I wonder if we might be able to advise that. That way we will have the consistency in the sort of uninterrupted lack of travel of a full semester but we would also have the sort of mental health breaks built in each week to the weekend. So it might be good to preempt class scheduling by

suggesting that we have a three-day weekend but in exchange we sacrifice spring break, and that might be a good compromise.

Maruf: so wait are you all proposing multiple three-day weekends over like... If a week is, a work week is five days long, we have like five three-day weekends throughout the semester?

>> I am proposing just four day work weeks.

[Laughter]

Maruf: well okay.

>> I don't think that would work with the classes that are Monday Wednesday Friday. I'm all for that. I would love it. But I think it would be very difficult for... Especially for the undergrad classes to have multiple three-day weekends because if you have a class on Monday Wednesday Friday, if it is on Friday every week or Monday every week those classes are constantly getting hit

>> Yeah I think that that is the upshot of recommending it now is that you would then allow people to prepare for that. We wouldn't have Monday Wednesday Friday class we would have to say Thursday or... Monday Wednesday or Wednesday Friday and people

could prepare. Because if I think we do any other alternation and five three-day weekends it will be more disruptive because they have to constantly be accommodating for that and dealing with jet like from the.

I'm not committed to this but I'm just saying.

>> I'm not sure how logistically this would work but I know we get a reading day before final exams. Would it be possible to maybe move the week devoted to spring break to a week of reading days, and that way you have all the semester and then you get the week to do like I have to write a thesis and submit that to EBT by May so I want that week but I also am curious to see if a dead week would be something that could be extended. Potentially.

Maruf: okay.

>> I think Jack there will be the problem of travel but spring break travel is like specifically contentious. Like traveling on any other week I mean it is not all the people going to the same destination and coming back in a sense. So yes it is not a solution but it is significantly better I think.

>> Just to provide an additional perspective, this same exact conversation has been being discussed within SGA on the undergraduate side as well and they brought up the ideas of mental health days even pre-Covid and what's going on with spring break. and one of the things they were talking about was specifically with Covid if we just did mental health days on Fridays a three-day weekend a lot of people still use a three day weekend to go home.

So thinking about if you're having a mental health day, if it would be happening in the middle of the week through the week, if you have five a semester one is on a Monday Wednesday Tuesday Thursday Friday then that would alleviate any pressure on one class to also still have enough of a deterrent to not extend the weekend as much to still delay people from wanting people to go home.

>> I think... That, and I do not mean this to come off as against any of the Plans proposed but I would think that like any radical changes, any large changes like moving the week of spring break, or not doing spring break or starting weeks later because they are so off the norm should just be thought out a little bit more than smaller changes just because like I said I really don't want to mess with students minds when they are trying to already stay afloat.

And they have got enough to keep track of. So that would just be my big thing is to just make sure that it is causing, it is having more of a good impact then it is causing stress unduly.

>> Maybe going back to the letter format then, would they be suggestions that we could have as an alternative to spring break, is how we might want to formulate it in the letter?

Awad: go ahead

Maruf: I mean I'm just agreeing

Awad: I think one way, I don't think this is something that just a half hour discussion will do so I think by the time while we are drafting the rest of the letter what I can do is send out an open response on a kind of forum for the delegates and I guess you can just give in more detail thoughts kind of your thoughts, and then we can, whatever we include in the letter if that is something people will vote on later but what we should include in the letter about this should come from everyone as

well. So I guess tomorrow I can send the form to all the delegates and then you can just write your ideas about it and we will go through it

Maruf: that's actually a good idea. We should have thought of that much earlier than this. [laughter] yeah probably graduate students and Awad if you send out the form tomorrow I would urge everyone to fill it out by Saturday night. So we can at least spend some day drafting it and get it out to you by Monday. And still have the proper timeline for...voting on the letter by the seventh.

>> Will there be a period of discussion like we did on the last one where you can submit comments in the comments either get addressed or discussed by the group?

Maruf: I think very very quick just because of the timeline of how I am trying to push this. I mean I think we can maybe do Monday day discussion type of deal. But I would like to be done with this entire thing Wednesday afternoon. And have it submitted to Dean DePauw and Provost [Clark].

Awad: I mean worst-case scenario I guess we can just ask them to include students when making the decision... But just those are our thoughts and maybe recommendations. But nothing is going to be set in stone. Because we can be on both sides of this.

Maruf: all right well that is kind of it from us. Closing, oh actually this is an important point. There's a caregiving survey that is being conducted by Provost Clark's office that is the link. We will get that I think GSS tweeted this thing out and we can send this thing out

Sharon: it has been treated. It's on Facebook and it is on LinkedIn.

Maruf: yeah and I think I don't know how I got this but it came on some email as well. Please to fill this out. Whether you are a caregiver or not. And then final statement for tonight, our next Gen. assembly meeting is November 5th at 5:30 PM.

Again I think over zoom. So that is it for us.