

MINUTES

Commission on Graduate and Professional Student Affairs

April 29, 2026

3:30 p.m.

Zoom

Present – Ronnie Mondal (presiding), Janice Austin, Dan Hong, Barbara Hoopes, Lee Learman, Charles Lowery, Sally Shupe, Aimée Surprenant, Jessica Wilkes, Madison Wypyski

Absent with Notice: Meaghan Davidson, Andrea Lopez, Lauren Surface

Absent: Sehrish Altaf, Mennatallah Fahmy, Matthew Irwin, Natalie Kehrlie, Sudev Namboodri, Nicholas Needham, Gonzalo Ortiz, Mihir Patel, Rohsaan Settle, Tyler Walters

Guests: Pooja Vilas Bhagawat

Ronnie called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. A quorum was not present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A quorum was not met; adoption of the agenda could not take place.

2. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of March 25, 2026.

Ronnie noted that these minutes have been voted electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Website.

3. Reports

- Graduate School – Aimée Surprenant: Dean Surprenant reported on initiatives to support graduate students, particularly international students, who face travel or financial hardship over the summer:
 - The Cunningham Fellowship was restructured into a summer fellowship and will fund 19 students through the fellowship with 5 additional students supported through a separate fellowship fund from a generous donor. Approximately 200 applications were received.
 - The Office of the Provost established a UAA Summer Graduate Internship Program offering 16 on-campus internship positions.
 - Cranwell International Center created a matching funding program for summer employment, with capacity for approximately 40 matching grants. These positions (on campus in Blacksburg or in the D.C. area) are open to international students and are not required to be related to a student's program of study.
 - The College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences solicited nominations from departments to support graduate students through foundation funds over the summer.
- Faculty Senate: It was noted that Faculty Senate is working on a minor sanctions proposal. Discussion arose regarding the graduate student grievance process, where Monika Gibson and Bryan Hanson are working to develop a proposal that will come before CGPSA and CGPS&P in the fall.
- AP Faculty Senate – Gonzalo Ortiz: None at this time.
- Staff Senate – Sally Shupe: Carrie Cox from Auxiliary Services presented to the Staff Senate on updates to the university parking program:

- Parking permits will auto-renew; hang tags will be eliminated. License plates will serve as permits.
- Vehicles must have a readable license plate. Vehicles without front license plates will not be permitted to back into parking spaces.
 - Rental cars must be registered.
 - Graduate-only parking spaces will be reclassified as commuter spaces. Members expressed concern that this change sends a message of disenfranchisement to graduate students and raised questions about whether graduate students would not compete with undergraduates for commuter parking spaces.
 - Specific lots will be reconfigured: Squires will become faculty/staff only; the Architecture Annex will become student parking. Metered spaces at the bookstore will be removed. Park Mobile spaces will move to the perimeter. The North End Center garage will utilize the Hokie Passport System.

4. Presentation

Pooja Vilas Bhagawat, GPSS President, presented on behalf of the Graduate Student Health and Well-Being Working Group. Key elements of the working group's charge include:

- Reviewing the 2019-20 report from a prior similar working group and the most recent Graduate School climate survey results.
- Identifying barriers that prevent graduate students from accessing existing campus resources.
- Exploring what additional resources graduate students need, including the possibility of a graduate student-focused peer mentoring program.
- Examining how faculty can serve as active partners in supporting graduate student well-being.

The working group plans to meet five to six times over the summer and produce short-term recommendations. The group also plans to hold dedicated meetings with student groups from all campuses to gather input. A suggestion was made to clarify this intent in the working group's description and to be explicit about the scope given the group's goals extend beyond those students who are on the Blacksburg campus.

5. Announcements

- This was the final meeting of the 2025-26 academic year. Minutes from this meeting will be voted electronically.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m. A quorum was not achieved, no formal motion to adjourn was made.