

MINUTES

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies

November 17, 2021, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

238 GLC and Zoom

Present: Montasir Abbas, Kayla Alward, Laura Belmonte, Nancy Bodenhorn, Christina DiMarino, Marcia Feuerstein, Chip Frazier, Barbara Hoopes, Maruf Hoque, Kaitlyn Malewicz, Roan Parrish, Nathaniel Porter, Cliff Shaffer, Ashley Shew, Aimée Surprenant (ex officio), Hannah Jane Upson, Alina Valop, Scott Weimer, Jordan Wescott, Pengtao Yue.

Absent with notification: Amanda Covey, Rachel Holloway (ex officio), Richard Vari, Coy Allen.

Absent without notification: Joe Eifert, Hannah Parks, Tyler Walters (ex officio).

Visitors and invited guests: Sarah Aadahl, Andrew Alexander, Khadijah Alsafwan, Casey Anne, Julie Armstrong, Janice Austin, John Barbish, Dhrtiman Barman, Arinjoy Basak, Francesca Battista, Ben Beiter, Megan Branson, Kristen Bretz, Emily Burns, Amanda Burroughs, Kennedy Cagne, Kai Jun Chew, Sarah Cozort, Shakiba Davari, Ivan Davenny, Kylie Davidson, Darcy Davison, Riley DeHority, Joshua Detwiler, Annie Dubner, Paul Emmons, Tom Ewing, Kayla Farrell, Maggie Fernandes, Bessie Flores, Alice Fox, Miles Frantz, Keri Friedman, Priyanka Ganguly, Kerry Lynn Gendreau, Xander Gershberg, Monika Gibson, Hannah Gignax, Laura Gil, Alex Giovannelli, Florence Gonsalves, Caleb Gore, Cathy Grimes, Soheil Habibi, Ariel Heminger, Bob Hicok, William Huckle, Cory Ilo, Xakin Ramirez Isunza, Sydney Johnson, Ananth Jonnavittula, Mustafa Yasin Kara, Paul Kavanaugh, Kevin Kish, Brian Kohler, Jack Leff, Joshua LeGrande, Jonathan Loyd, Taylor Loy, Noah Lyons, Savannah Mandel, Monica Mellini, Haley Michel, Phillip Miskovic, Aidan Murphy, April Myers, Shaga Navabpour, Matt Norris, JoAnna Platzner, Kase Poling, Anusha Prasad, Isaac Pressgrove, Neil Raj, Leah Ramnath, Theo Richards, Chloe Robertson, Jacob Robinson, Christian Runyon, Raturaj Sambhus, Lisa Schibelius, Malle Schilling, Will Snyder, Nure Tasnina, Maddie Tepper, Tsung Yen Tsau, Isaac VanDiest, Muntasir Wahed, Eugene Lacy Watson, Amanda Wei, Damien Williams, Kulyash Zhumadilova.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Feuerstein at 3:32p.m. A quorum was verified.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Leff made a motion to move Old Business be discussed prior to new business on the agenda; the motion was seconded by Kait Malewicz. The agenda was approved as amended.

Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of November 3, 2021 were approved electronically.

Committee Reports

President's Committee on Governance

Dr. Bob Hicok presented on the President's Committee on Governance proposed revisions to the University governance structure.

Graduate Curriculum Committee

Dr. Huckle reported that the GCC approved 9 new and revised proposals for the Spring 2022, 3 new and revised proposals for the Fall 2022, one (1) revised degree during the November 11, 2021 meeting. The report for the November 11, 2021 meeting was presented for approval and a motion was made and seconded to approve the GCC report as presented.

Graduate Student Appeals Committee

Dean Surprenant reported no appeals are pending.

Degree Requirements, Standards, Criteria, and Academic Progress (DRSCAP) Committee

Dr. Hoopes reported DRSCAP met last week and the posthumous degree resolution is being reviewed by various University offices prior to being introduced here at CGPS&P. The committee continues their work on accommodation process and other resources for graduate students with disabilities. Information has been received from peer institutions regarding English proficiency testing accepted; this information will be used as DRSCAP considers VT requirements.

Old Business

The Chair opened discussion on GPSS Resolution 2021-22B (CGPSP Resolution 2021-22D) Resolution to Make 12-month Graduate Contracts the Default Contract for second reading. It was stated that the GPSS' goal with this resolution is for graduate students on assistantship to receive a living wage and they were open to amicable discussion on revisions to sections of the resolution that were points of contention.

A commission member noted that while the GPSS had discussion among its members and constituents on the resolution, broader university conversation on the resolution was lacking, therefore being able to arrive at consensus on the content of the resolution in this meeting would be unreasonable. It was stated in response that broad university input was received in the drafting of the resolution.

The comment was made that resolutions with budget implications needed Budget Office approval before the resolution proceeding to University Council and highlighted the text in the Be It Further Resolved paragraph "If this budget proposal is voted down, then the graduate school will be responsible for finding the money to implement the assistantship expansion by 2023-2024". GPSS was willing to negotiate the Be It Further Resolved paragraph if it is a budget implication as the main point of the resolution is to charge a taskforce to establish a streamlined implemented plan. It was expressed that the resolution in the current state would be sent back to the Commission from University Council for broader university conversation thereby losing valuable time in implementing the resolution. Others stated that it is imperative that action on this issue be expedient and thoughtful now and that it cannot wait additional years as graduate students have needed and continue to need assistance now.

A commission member stated they sincerely support a living wage for graduate students. They asked why the nine-month wage could not be raised sufficiently to meet living wage standards rather than changing the contract period to twelve months that creates an entire set of administrative issues. In response it was noted the reason the twelve-month contract wording was chosen was because (1) the GPSS felt it carried additional considerations and benefits for the most

marginalized graduate student, particularly international students, and (2) graduate student work twelve months out of the year but are paid for nine months so a consistent paycheck would benefit the students. There was willingness to remove the twelve-month contract wording and adding wording for the cost of living raise of approximately \$6,500 per year. There was support of a cost of living increase but not the twelve-month contract due to the administrative implications and one member stated that it was a naive viewpoint of university operations.

A question was posed about additional financial data that may be available. It was noted that information was contained in the resolution appendix. It was recommended to compare VT compensation packages against our peer institutions.

A spirited discussion followed with statements outlining the hardships felt by graduate students as well as further disagreement around the approach of the solution. A member requested that the audience refrain from interrupting, laughing, or be disrespectful while they were talking.

It was suggested that the Therefore Be It Resolved paragraphs state that a task force would be created **and** extending graduate assistantships to twelve-month contracts. If the wording can be clarified that this resolution is for the establishment of a taskforce to address graduate student living wage concerns and bring that report to the Commission for implementation, there would be greater support for the resolution and would be a better path. A commission member also asked that the conversation remain professional and respectful in tone without laughing while others are giving their perspective as we need to value everyone's perspective and listen thoughtfully.

It was noted the graduate students have a valid concern on how this will be addressed now and not farther out unless concrete empowerment takes place. A task force can result in concrete action and a plan for implementation.

In response to the points raised during discussion, a proposal was made to modify the wording in the two Therefore Be It Resolved paragraphs to reflect the university commitment to implementing a living wage by 2023-24 with the task force convened to implement this. The language charging the task force will not stipule the nine to twelve-month contracts but rather recommended as an option that could be considered as part of process, but not exclusively. A change would also be made to the title of the resolution to: Establish a Living Wage.

At 5:00pm, Maruf Hoque moved to extend the meeting by 15 minutes, the motion was seconded and passed.

A member agreed to amend the resolution to reflect the discussion in the meeting today and schedule a Commission meeting next week for the Commission to discuss only the amended GPSS Resolution 2021-22B.

Adjournment

There was consensus that remaining agenda items would be addressed at the next scheduled meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/

Janice E. Austin
On behalf of Aimée Surprenant, Ph.D.
Dean for Graduate Education