

Commission on Student Affairs Minutes

April 1, 2021

3:30 PM

Zoom

Present: Victoria Dashevsky (presiding); Abby Patterson, Amanda Coleman, Awad Abdelhalim, Camille Roberts, Camellia Pastore, Conrad Briles, Danielle Panico, Grant Bommer, Jennifer Pike, Jes Davis, Jessica Nguyen, Kabyl Oxikbayev, Kase Poling, Kayla Alward, Kimberly Smith, Lauren Surface, Maruf Hoque, Nathaniel Soss, Susanna Rinehart, Tara Frank, Tim Lin

Absent with Notice: n/a

Absent: Anisha Hari, Ariana Guevara, Ariana Labat, Izu Elfaki, Katherine Franz, Miles Guth, Sabrina Sturgeon, Sara Wynkoop, Spencer Hamilton, Steve Matuszak, Tahreem Alam

Guests: Aidan Murphy, Alec Bradfield, April Myers, Ariana DiFillippo, Ben Beiter, Bill Weisenhorn, Brandon Shields, Casey Polk, Elmouiz Elfaki, Frank Shushok, Gina Tamburro, Hannah Kuneyl, James Bridgeforth, Jess Silvia, Kenlee Andreu, Lori Buchanan, Phil Miskovic, Rose Oglesby, Scott Nachlis

Victoria Dashevsky called the meeting to order at 3:33pm. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

2. Announcement of Approval and Posting of Minutes

- November 5, 2020
- November 19, 2020
- December 3, 2020
- February 4, 2021

These minutes have been voted on electronically and will be posted on the university web.

3. CSA Announcements

- Request for when attending Zoom meetings via cell phone
- Importance of communicating anticipated absence

4. Old Business

a. Student Budget Board (SBB) Money Allocation – Victoria Dashevsky

Prior to voting, a discussion was had regarding CSA reallocating left over money from Student Budget Board (SBB) to the university. Kase shared this had been discussed in detail at the last Graduate Student Assembly meeting, and graduate students were not in favor of giving this money to Dining Services. Both Kase and Conrad shared other ideas discussed, to which students were in favor of were: having a Welcome Back celebration event for students as a way of thanking students for their understanding and patience throughout the COVID pandemic, or the money be retained for use by Registered Students Organizations (RSO's).

Victoria entertained a motion if CSA wants to reallocate the leftover funds from Student Budget Board (SBB) to Dining Services. A vote was taken on the motion, the motion did not pass, and therefore the SBB overage will roll over to next year.

b. Resolution to approve the establishment of an Undergraduate Student Senate (USS)

Resolution CSA 2020-21B

Establishment of an Undergraduate Student Senate (USS)

Victoria shared that the first reading for this took place at the March 18 CSA meeting, and she mistakenly left it off of the agenda for today for the second reading. Within one week, Victoria stated she will be sending out an email to all members for an “E-Vote” pertaining to both the USS and GPSS Resolutions.

5. New Business

a. Student Budget Board (SBB) Annual Funding – Alec Bradfield

Alec Bradfield presented the proposed Student Budget Board appropriation strategy for 2021-2022. (Document attached.)

Question was raised as to how and where the rollover of extra SBB funds just voted on would be allocated. Alec stated that it is too soon to answer this question, as this will be discussed at the next meeting, and ultimately decided by SBB members. He offered to give an update at the next CSA meeting in two weeks.

Another question was raised regarding how in general SBB allocates money to Registered Student Organizations. Alec shared that RSO’s apply for funding based on need, and the SBB grants requests up to a certain amount. In short, organizations obtain money on a first-come, first-serve need basis.

A long, detailed discussion ensued about the significant increase in SBB funds, and where exactly this money came from. CSA members expressed the confusion related to the current carryover amount on the spreadsheet presented. They requested further clarification of the additional amount of carry over funding, to which they just voted to not be given to Dining Services, asking where and how this effects the overall SBB overage/carryover. Alec shared that the money came from “unused funds.” He explained there was an influx of unused funds because organizations simply did not request funds during the COVID pandemic. In addition, Scott Nachlis further explained there are a lot of requests where SBB money is approved, yet the approved amount is not fully used. In addition, the overall number of requests this year was significantly smaller; the overall number of actual events has been smaller; and due to so many events being completely virtual, the overall cost of events that took place throughout this past year was less.

CSA asked for further clarification on the impact of the 5% cut, and how that translates in terms of total money. Alec shared that 5% will be cut from the SBB budget indefinitely. This is presumably to help make up for the deficit, and losses the university faced throughout the pandemic. Scott reiterated this cut is throughout the university, and not just related to SBB. Frank shared the 5% cut is equivalent to approximately \$58K to \$60K.

Gina Tamburro, Associate Director for Engagement, who is over SBB, joined the meeting to answer questions, elaborate further, and clear up the confusion as it relates to the SBB overage. She confirmed these funds were not shown, or figured into the appropriation strategy as presented by Alec, and therefore are in addition to, all of the figures shown in the presentation. In addition, once the overage is reflected in the spreadsheet, the revised carryover amount will then include the extra \$300K.

Gina shared and acknowledged this is indeed a large carryover amount, but due to the COVID pandemic and the restrictions on in person gathering size, etc. lead to a large decrease in the number of SBB requests. She also elaborated on the fact that SBB usually rolls over about \$110K each year. In addition, SBB processes monthly pull-backs of unspent SBB funds, and at the end of each academic year that total figure can range anywhere from \$150K to \$300K.

Several members mentioned they want to be able to see an updated 2021-2022 Appropriations Strategy with the finalized, actual numbers and totals. Frank shared that the actual carryover, (non-encumbered) amount for Registered Student Orgs is \$417K, and for University Chartered Student Orgs is \$398K.

A motion was made, and seconded to defer the discussion until the next meeting.

b. GPSS Constitution presentation – Ben Beiter
Graduate and Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Resolution
CSA 2020-21C

Ben Beiter presented the resolution for first reading. Ben shared an overview of the revised constitution, and shared the process behind its creation. (Presentation attached.)

Many GSA members did not find the original constitution very helpful, so it was re-written with a clearer purpose, as well as structure. In addition, a handbook and bylaws are being crafted alongside the constitution. These documents are still a work in progress.

6. Announcements

a. Jessica Nguyen (AASU)

Jessica shared she is still in the midst of writing a resolution in support of the APIDA Community.

b. Nathaniel Soss (HokiePRIDE)

A discussion was had, and some suggestions were made on what next steps to take pertaining to the issues surrounding the student organization, Turning Point USA at Virginia Tech.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 5:32pm.

Next meeting is Thursday, April 15 @ 3:30pm.

Student Budget Board, Proposed 2021-2022 Appropriations Strategy

<u>Funding Available</u>		<u>Description</u>
University Budget Office Allocation	\$ 1,166,019.55	Amount given to SBB from the Budget Office (reflective of 5% cut).
Carryover known F20	\$ 344,007.45	Large amounts of unused funds due to COVID in FY21. Generally, the Board uses \$110,000 in known carryover each year. The current amount is being used to cover a 5% cut in the overall budget and given we have unused at the beginning of the year versus the end, when we pull back funds, we are front-loading the budget in order to best support students and orgs for next year.
Total Funds Available	\$ 1,510,027.00	
<u>21-22 Appropriations</u>		<u>Description</u>
The Source	\$ (9,000.00)	Funding for Operations for The Source. For the past 3 years we've allocated \$15,000 and have not used that funding in total. After review with AD, Student Orgs, it was decided that \$9000 is more reasonable.
Student Legal Services Contract	\$ (77,000.00)	Contract for Diana Miller for grad, undergrad, and student org support.
UCSO Annual Funding Allocation	\$ (796,881.60)	Allocated through Annual Funding process in Spring 2021.
RSO Funding	\$ (600,000.00)	25% of total allocation pot (\$600,000) will be used for conference and competitions. - 15% to competitions - 10% to conferences Continue to disseminate funding widely and allow for funds to be spent on programming. The total RSO Funding Allocation will be split 50/50 between Fall and Spring.
UCSO Contingency Funding	\$ (25,000.00)	Used for unforeseen expenses for UCSOs that may come up throughout the year.
Total 2020-2021 Appropriations	\$ 1,507,881.60	
Total Remaining	\$ 2,145.40	
<u>Return/Carryover Allocations</u>		<u>Description</u>
RSO Funding	\$ -	Usually bringing RSO Funding to \$600,000 and creating a UCSO Contingency are done with returned funds. Given we already know returns exist, we moved this to Row 5 (front end).
UCSO Contingency	-	



GSA - GPSS Constitution Revision

GSA Judicial and Internal Affairs Committee



Problems with Old Constitution

1. Old Constitution is verbose, not accessible and does not reflect how GSA actually operates
2. The constitution contained too much information, especially procedural information that does not belong in a structural document
3. Workloads of some Executive board members are too high and imbalanced
4. There is no official link to Graduate Student Organizations at Remote Campuses
5. There is no established process to bring up issues to be addressed
6. There is little continuity year-to-year within the GSA
7. There is not a focus on how the Delegates could advocate effectively through the GSA, all the power is in the hands of the Executive Board

Bottom line: The Constitution should convey a clear purpose and structure. Ours did not.

The mission of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate is to serve as a voice for all graduate students through advocacy and community-building in a culture of inclusivity and support; ensure access to the resources necessary for scholarly and professional success; and foster a network of coalitions among all graduate students to help us achieve these goals.

1. **Advocacy** - Work with decision makers to address needs of the graduate student body.
2. **Community Building** - Host events to connect people, and to help with issue resolution.
3. **Scholarly and Professional Development** - Support through Events and Programs.
4. **Movement Building** - Guide graduate students in forming departmental structures for advocacy.

Overall Goal:

Clearly establish the high-level structure and functions of the GPSS and write the founding documents such that they are accessible and facilitate student leadership.

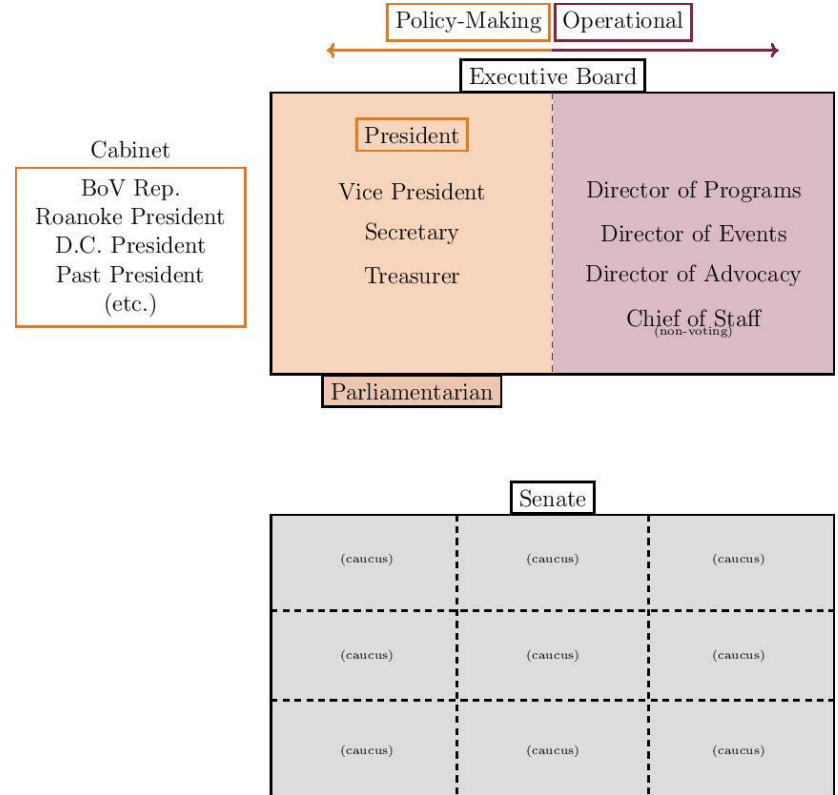
Three Foundational Documents:

1. **Constitution:** Define the functions, structures, and processes central to the mission of the GPSS.
2. **Bylaws:** Codify critical operations, guidelines, and procedures for how GPSS functions.
3. **Handbook:** Memorialize current normative practices, recommendations, and guidance for all members.

Constitutional Structure of GPSS

Parts of GPSS Structure

- Senate:** Two Senators representing students in each Department/Program, organized into College Based Caucuses
- Executive Board:** Two new positions: Chief of Staff, and Director of Advocacy
- Cabinet:** BOV Rep, Presidents of Extended Campus Senates, Past President, and other Graduate Student other leaders to advise the President

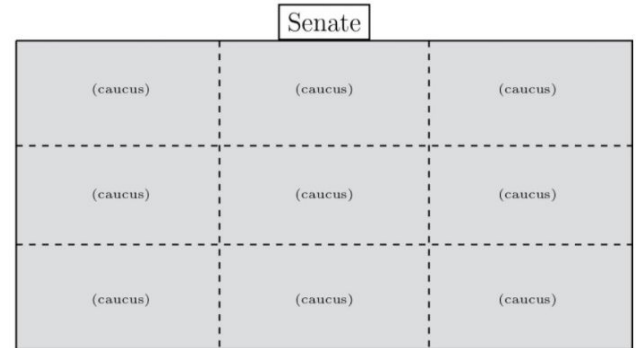


Desired Change:

Focus on advocating for graduate students both on the “local” level (facilitating the formation of departmental graduate groups) and the “institutional” level (identifying key issues affecting all graduate students for GPSS to bring to the attention of the rest of Shared Governance)

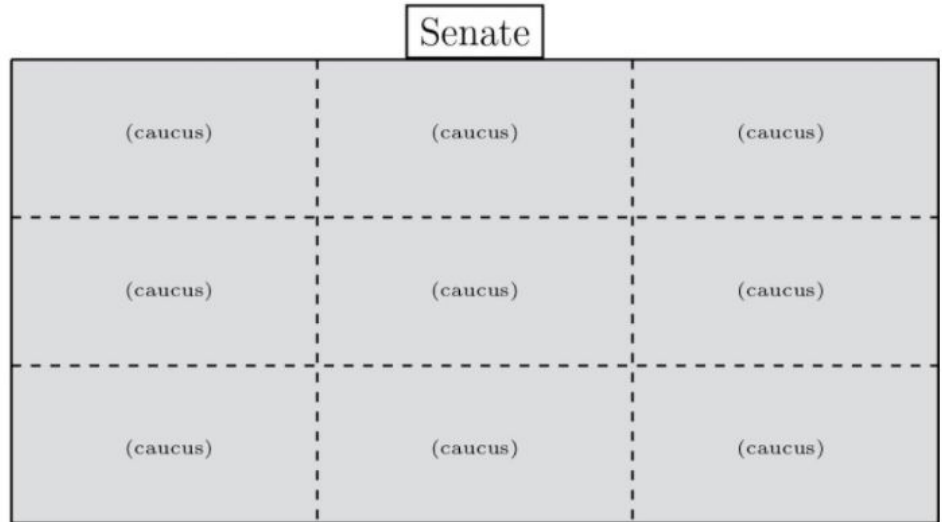
Actions:

1. Created the Director of Advocacy Executive Board Position who will facilitate formation of departmental and program-level graduate groups.
2. Organize Senators from departments into Caucuses by College to form a common identity and enable advocacy around common issues.



Proposed List of College-Based Caucuses

1. Agriculture & Life Sciences
2. Architecture & Urban Studies
3. Business
4. Engineering
5. Inter-College/Graduate School
6. Liberal Arts & Human Sciences
7. Natural Resources & Environment
8. Science
9. Medical
10. Diversity*
11. Extended Campus*



Diversity Caucus

1. Composed of graduate student Senators representing registered UCSO's and Faculty/Staff Caucuses recognized by InclusiveVT
 - a. Asian American Student Union, Black Graduate Student Organization, Council of International Student Orgs, HokiePride/LGBTQ+, Jewish Student union, Latino Association of Student Orgs, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American, Disability Caucus, Virginia Veterans, Women's Alliance

Desired Change:

Clarify the legislative roles and powers available to GPSS Senators.

Actions:

Define three types of committees of Senators that can be formed within GPSS.

1. **Standing Committees:** Always present in the GPSS, these deal with issues essential to the operation of GPSS (e.g. Finance Committee, Judicial Committee, Programs Committee etc.)
2. **Policy Committees:** Temporary committees convened to investigate and discuss a particular policy or issue.
3. **Operational Committees:** Temporary Committees convened to plan, organize, and carry out GPSS events or projects.

Guidelines for how to use legislative powers will be laid out in the handbook, including writing resolutions.

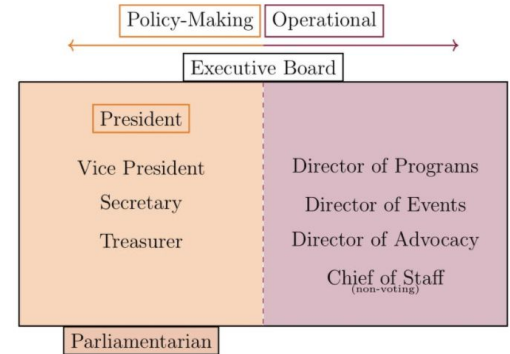
Desired Changes and Actions Taken

Desired Change:

Clarify the roles of the Executive Board and reduce the overall workload of these student leaders.

Actions:

1. Separated Executive Board positions into Policy Making and Operational Positions.
2. Establish the Chief of Staff position, who will perform a majority of the administrative work needed to ensure effective internal operation of the GPSS.
3. The Parliamentarian is appointed by the President as a expert on rules and procedures



Desired Changes and Actions Taken

Desired Change:

Unite the voices of the foremost graduate student leaders from through the Virginia Tech community, especially those of students at remote campuses that are often overlooked.

Actions:

1. Establish the President's Cabinet. The Cabinet ensures the voices of all graduate students are heard, and provides these leaders the opportunity to unite their efforts on particular issues affecting all graduate students.
2. Past President position is held by a former President or Vice President who is retained to offer advice and guidance.
3. Additional Members can be added by the President.

Cabinet

BoV Rep.
Roanoke President
D.C. President
Past President
(etc.)

Desired Change:

Maintain institutional memory within the GPSS, maintaining momentum in advocacy activity from year to year.

Actions:

1. Recording norms and best practices of student governance at VT in a Handbook
2. Establish the position of Past President
3. Change the date of elections from the end of the Spring Semester the end of the Fall Semester. This
 - a. Staggers the terms of the President and BOV rep.
 - b. Allows elected members to learn their roles while there is still momentum of already begun GPSS activities.
 - c. Results in experienced leaders during the summer semester when, historically, few initiatives have begun.

Desired Change:

Provide standardized and more efficient access to funds made available through GPSS, as well as increase the support the GPSS can give to programs, events, and other graduate student organizations.

Actions:

1. Established the Graduate Student Budget Board
 - a. This places control of part of the student activities fees that we pay directly under the control of a governing body, increasing accountability, transparency, and access to the funds.
 - b. The Programs and Events currently conducted by GSA are one of its strengths, this will expand the support that GPSS can provide to these and any future programs/events.
 - c. Access to funds for student activities coming through GPSS will encourage wider participation of the graduate student body in the governance process.

Summary of Benefits from the New Structure

1. The Director of Advocacy and new organization in the Senate emphasizes the role that Senators have in representing graduate students in their departments, advocating on their behalf.
2. Formation of Caucuses and Committees provides a structure of support within GPSS for Senators to communicate effectively, discuss issues, and compose resolutions.
3. Clarifying and organizing the Policy-Making and Operational roles on the Executive Board allows for each member to operate more effectively.
4. Establish the President's Cabinet to ensure all graduate students are represented.
5. Changes to some positions and procedures will preserve institutional memory within GPSS, enabling GPSS to maintain multi-year initiatives and to learn from past successes how best to work for the benefit of all graduate and professional students at VT.

This encourages all graduate students to participate in student governance, and makes it more accessible.

Purpose:

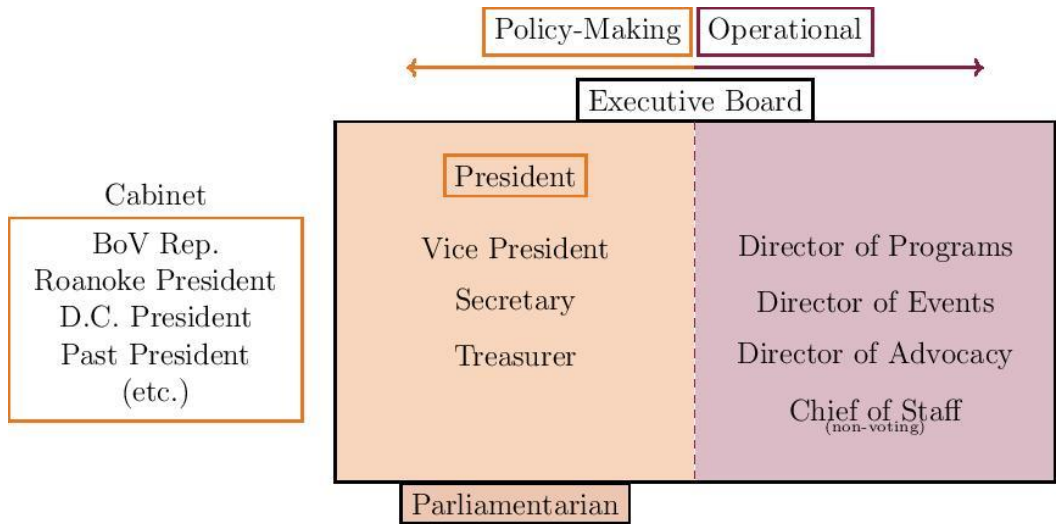
Legislative body that is a part of the new Shared Governance Structure at VT with the power to write resolutions and define policy. It's charge is to identify, examine, and legislate on all issues related to graduate students. It is subject to oversight by GPSS.

Proposed Membership:

1. Co-Chaired by the President of GPSS and the Dean of the Graduate School.
2. Proposed membership:
 - a. Student services (Student affairs & Grad School)
 - b. Office of Policy and Governance
 - c. VP Student Affairs
 - d. Communications/University Relations
 - e. Human Resources
 - f. Grad/Professional Students

Next Steps:

1. Form a Review Process of GPSS activities
 - a. Form criterion for a review of the new constitutional changes (e.g. election cycle)
 - b. Involve Faculty/Staff Senate to help with conducting a satisfactory review
2. Involvement from Faculty Members in GPSS Programs (judges for research symposium, reviewers for abstracts, etc).
3. Formal guidance from the Office of Policy and Governance for graduate students in how governance works, writing resolutions, and other skills for student representatives.



Questions?

