University Council Minutes
February 7, 2022
3:30 PM
1045 Pamplin Hall


Absent with notice: Tim Sands, Michael Friedlander, Lisa Wilkes, Robin Queen, & Serena Young

Absent: Frank Shushok, Steve McKnight, D’Arrin Calloway, Adyan Atiq, & Alex Pomeroy,

Guests: A list of guests present is attached.

Dr. Clarke called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. 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 of December 6, 2021

Dr. Clarke noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be publicly accessed on the Governance Information System on the Web (http://www.governance.vt.edu).

3. Commission Chair Reports

Dr. Clarke asked the Commission chairs to present briefly their goals for the academic year.

1. Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs – Janice Austin, Chair

   a. Completed a resolution to add the A/P Faculty Senate president as a representative to the Board of Visitors
   b. Will have several resolutions for second reading at University Council to add A/P Faculty representation to governance committees
   c. Ongoing collaborations with the Administrative and Professional (A/P) Faculty Senate
   d. Will conduct a thorough review of and develop a resolution for changes to the Faculty Handbook related to the A/P Faculty grievance process
   e. Taking an active role in the Job Architecture Project with quarterly updates from Evans Lusuli, director of compensation in human resources
   f. Postponed a resolution to add a non-voting member seat on University Council for the A/P Faculty Senate President
2. Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity – Christa Miller, Vice Chair

a. Prospective APIDA resolution:
   • CEOD has decided to implement some of the recommendations from ICAC to move forward
   • Implementing a disaggregation data working group to take a look at how we can serve APIDA and other communities better
b. Resolution forthcoming to rename The Strong Together Week to the Principles of Community Week which will be an update to Presidential Policy Memorandum (PPM) 286
c. Will be shepherding updates to the EEO policy (Policy 1025) which is currently on pause due to legislation
d. Will be reviewing PID workflow changes

3. Commission on Faculty Affairs – Ellen Plummer, Member

a. Faculty Handbook/Policy Revisions and Updates
   • Follow-up from 2020-21 work
   • Ongoing revisions
b. Will be discussing Conflict of Commitment with the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation and the Commission on Research
c. Will continue the advancement of the Faculty Service project
d. Will continue work regarding SPOT (Student Perceptions of Teaching) scores
   • Development of best practices
   • Exploring bias in scores and impact on faculty by discipline/rank
   • Proposing split between teaching and facilities questions
   • Propose changes to the P&T requirements with regards to the way the teaching is evaluated and the use of SPOT scores in the evaluation
e. Will discuss shared governance resolutions
f. Faculty Reconciliation Committee modifications and associated Handbook changes

4. Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies – Marcía Feuerstein, Chair

a. Working on a process for a Posthumous Degree Awarding Policy, which has been reviewed by various university offices including the Commission on University Support, Commission on Faculty Affairs, the Provost Office, and University Legal Counsel
b. Focusing on graduate students with disabilities to identify and institute initiatives for making the accommodations process less intimidating and cumbersome
c. Continue reviewing Graduate and Professional Student Senate resolutions for revisions and relevance before they are introduced to the commission
d. Discussions with the Graduate School on a proposal regarding co-ops for graduate students to help fulfill the university’s commitment to work-integrated learning.

5. Commission on Outreach and International Affairs – Robert Weiss, Chair

a. Continues to make steady progress in gathering vital information to evaluate study abroad programs as an experiential learning activity
   • Presentation and accompanying discussions about accessibility, affordability, and concerns about how study abroad programs may extend the time to degree
   • Equity of access to study abroad programs and how it relates to financial problems, disability status, and how a student attends Virginia Tech (such as athletes are often excluded due to their training and competition schedule)
b. Exploring options on how Virginia Tech can serve its land-grant mission by increasing economic development opportunities and increasing resilience in the rural area of Southwest Virginia.
   • Will have a first reading of a resolution to establish the Center for Rural Education
6. Commission on Research – Jeffrey Alwang, Chair
   a. Review and comment on Conflict of Interest/Commitment policy updates proposal
   b. Continue work on research faculty representation
   c. Working with several other areas of the university on data management
   d. Continuing work on the post-doc policy and chapter in the Faculty Handbook to cover post-doctoral
      professionals and general issues of interest to post-docs
   e. Review institutes
      • ICAT – has been completed
      • ISCE – expect to be completed for the March meeting
   f. Software procurement: have engaged ITPALS and expect to continue working on this through the
      Spring semester

7. Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs – LaTawnya Burleson, Chair
   a. Discussing tiered parking payment structure
   b. Considering updating staff position descriptions to accurately reflect job duties

8. Commission on Student Affairs – Ariana Guevara, Chair
   a. Infuse leadership lesson and conversations into the Commission on Student Affairs meetings
   b. Invite university leaders to CSA to have conversations with the members on the most pressing
      issues facing their constituencies
   c. Ensure the smooth transition of the Student Budget Board from the CSA to the Undergraduate
      Student Senate Appropriations Committee
   d. Continue supporting and hearing resolutions that may benefit the student body, as well as our
      Virginia Tech community

9. Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies – Sean Corcoran, Chair
   a. Will be reviewing a resolution from the Academic Support Committee regarding the inclusion of
      Juneteenth as a holiday on the academic calendar
   b. Will hear an update on the Academic Relief Policy from the Academic Affairs subcommittee
      • Student readmission/re-enrollment
      • Retractive timeline
      • Appearance of coursework on the transcript
   c. Will focus on cleaning up the academic policies in collaboration with the Registrar and the Office of
      Policy and Governance

10. Commission on University Support – John Benner, Chair
    a. Working with the Energy and Sustainability Committee to develop resolutions to further the Climate
        Action Commitment
    b. Will have a presentation on sustainable precision animal agriculture platform of the Center for
        Advanced Innovation in Agriculture
    c. Will have a presentation on Google Suite changes and updates
    d. Will have a presentation on Virginia Tech Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Centers
    e. Will have a presentation on the campus master plan
    f. Will potentially have a presentation on the Greater Washington DC metro area

4. Unfinished Business

Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs
Resolution CAPFA 2021-22B
Resolution to Include the Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs to the Employee Benefits Committee Reporting Structure

Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs Resolution CAPFA 2021-22C
Resolution to Revise the Membership of the Employee Benefits Committee to Add Three Administrative and Professional Faculty Senators

Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs Resolution CAPFA 2021-22D
Resolution to Revise the Membership of the Commencement Committee to Add One Administrative and Professional Faculty Representative

Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs Resolution CAPFA 2021-22E
Resolution to Revise the Membership of the Energy and Sustainability Committee to Add Two Administrative and Professional Faculty Representatives

Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs Resolution CAPFA 2021-22F
Resolution to Revise the Membership of the Library Committee to Add One Administrative and Professional Faculty Representative

Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs Resolution CAPFA 2021-22G
Resolution to Revise the Membership of the Transportation and Parking Committee to Add Two Administrative and Professional Faculty Representatives

Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs Resolution CAPFA 2021-22H
Resolution to Revise the Membership of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee to Add One Administrative and Professional Faculty Representative

Janice Austin presented resolutions CAPFA 2021-22 B, CAPFA 2021-22C, CAPFA 2021-22D, CAPFA 2021-22E, CAPFA 2021-22F, CAPFA 2021-22G, and CAPFA 2021-22H for second reading and made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

5. **New Business**

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies Resolution CGPSP 2021-22D
Resolution to Institute a Living Wage for Graduate Students

Marcia Feuerstein presented the resolution for first reading and introduced Aimee Surprenant, Dean of the Graduate School, and Jack Leff, President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, to provide background and answer questions on this resolution. Dean Surprenant and Mr. Leff gave a brief presentation (attached) that was followed by lengthy discussion. It was determined that there were nearly 500 people in attendance between in-person and Zoom participation. Comments submitted through the “chat” function on Zoom were recorded in a separate document, which is attached to these minutes.

All graduate students who commented spoke in favor of the living wage and having a majority of graduate students on the task force so that their lived experiences, particularly those of graduate students whose visas do not permit them to work, could be represented and taken into consideration. Several students related their
personal stories. Provost Clarke explained that task forces are appointed by university leaders, in this case, either President Sands, Provost Clarke, or Dean Surprenant. While Provost Clarke and Dean Surprenant agreed that having significant graduate/professional student representation on the proposed task force is necessary and important, neither was willing to commit to designating a specific percentage of seats on the task force to graduate/professional students. Vice President for Finance Ken Miller shared some facts (fact sheet attached) about the value of the overall benefits to graduate students on assistantship beyond the stipend, such as the tuition remission and the fact that it covers certain fees as well as tuition. He clarified that tuition remission is a cost to the university in terms of foregone revenue that is needed to support instruction. Several faculty spoke in favor of the resolution noting that graduate students should have a living wage and it also would make the university more competitive in recruiting graduate students. However, some faculty who were in favor also offered some caveats such as the risk of the resolution failing due to a dispute over the composition of the task force, or the potential of raising stipends to a level that would cause a PI to consider involving a technician or post-doc rather than a graduate student who has less experience and is there primarily to learn.

After a lengthy discussion Dr. Clarke summarized the discussion as follows:

1. It is in the interest of the university to look seriously at the issue of overall compensation and support for graduate students in terms of competitiveness and incorporate a commitment to provide a solution.
2. The composition of the taskforce will need to be discussed.
3. As the Vice President for Finance discussed, the overall cost of supporting a graduate student on assistantship needs to be considered, including the cost to the university for providing the tuition remission.
4. Consideration should be given to how principal investigators would address those graduate assistants who are funded through extramural grants and contracts and the pros and cons of involving graduate assistants versus technicians or post-docs.
5. Comments were made on the amount of financial aid available to graduate students. It should be determined what constitutes an assistantship and whether that can be considered a wage.

Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
 Resolution CGPSP 2021-22D
Resolution to Change the GPSS Constitution to Move Transition of Leadership to Spring

Marcía Feuerstein presented the resolution for first reading and introduced Jack Leff, President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, to provide background and answer questions on this resolution. He stated that changing the election of the GPSS leadership from the fall to May (taking office at the end of the spring rather than the beginning of spring) will allow for a smoother transition that can happen during the spring semester. This will also help to preserve institutional memory.

Kim O’Rourke noted that the new Graduate and Professional Student Senate Constitution and Bylaws that were approved through governance in Spring 2021 were the result of a year’s work by the former Graduate Student Assembly, and they had come up with the current plan for leadership transitions to ensure that there would never be a time when the entire leadership of the GPSS would be brand new. According to the current plan, the Graduate/Professional Student representative to the Board of Visitors would take office on July 1, and the executive board of GPSS would take office at the start of spring semester. Jack Leff replied that the BOV representative was not fully integrated into the leadership of GPSS and the proposed change would align with the timing of leadership transitions in the other senates.

O’Rourke noted that according to the GPSS Constitution and Bylaws currently in effect, an election of the executive board was to have occurred at the end of fall semester, and that did not occur. She pointed out that if no election is held and the resolution is passed, then the current leadership of GPSS would actually be in office until May of 2023 (according to the proposed resolution). Leff and Alice Fox clarified that an election is currently under way for the GPSS executive board members, who would then take office in May 2022. Leff added that he is not seeking re-election as president of GPSS.
6. Announcement of Approval and Posting of Commission Minutes

These minutes have been voted on electronically and will be posted on the University web (http://www.governance.vt.edu). Note that the purpose of voting on Commission minutes is to accept them for filing. University Council Bylaws require that policy items be brought forward in resolution form for University Council action.

- Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs
  September 8, 2021
  November 10, 2021

- Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity
  November 16, 2021

- Commission on Faculty Affairs
  November 19, 2021

- Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies
  November 17, 2021
  November 22, 2021

- Commission on Outreach and International Affairs
  November 18, 2021
  December 9, 2021

- Commission on Research
  November 11, 2021

- Commission on Staff Policies and Affairs
  November 30, 2021

- Commission on University Support
  October 21, 2021
  November 18, 2021

7. Adjournment-

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:47 p.m.
CGPSP 2021-2022D
Resolution to Establish a Living Wage for Graduate Students

FEBRUARY 7TH, 2022

Our Graduate Students

- ~7,000 graduate students
- Average age: 26-30 years
- 50% married or partnered
- 25% have children
- Approximately 3,700 students on assistantships in any given year
- GTA, GRA, GA all come with tuition remission
Graduate Student Challenges

- Graduate students are facing financial and economic hardships across Virginia.
- At Virginia Tech, 49% of international and 35% of domestic graduate students face food insecurity.
- The cost-of-living survey found that graduate students are not making enough to pay rent and medical costs. And the burden is especially cumbersome for international students.

What do our graduate students do?
Meet Joe Meister
Master’s program
Engineering Education
Blacksburg Campus

Joe’s Finances:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Stipend</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Fees</td>
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<td>Utilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,136.68</td>
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Source: 2020-2021 Graduate Student Assembly Cost of Living Report
Meet Jane Fudd  
PhD Student  
Nuclear Engineering  
NVC

Jane’s Finances:

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<th>Expenses</th>
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<td>Fees</td>
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<td>Utilities</td>
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<td>Groceries</td>
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<td>Income Tax</td>
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<td>Parking/transportation</td>
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<td>Healthcare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,851.60</td>
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<table>
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<th>Stipend</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,175.79</td>
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<table>
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<th>Difference</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>$-675.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2020-2021 Graduate Student Assembly Cost of Living Report
Further considerations

- Funding is a significant mental health stressor (VT GS Mental Health Task Force report).
- Funding is a significant factor in recruiting top students (VT).
- Funding is an equity issue, with students from underrepresented backgrounds often facing additional financial burdens that privileged students don’t face. Which causes already stretched dollars to be stretched even farther.

Graduate Student Testimonies

“As a graduate student, it is hard to live without worrying about my financial situation during the academic year, not to mention the summer. The neverending rent increases, inflation of gas and food prices, and fees makes it hard to thrive in my academic life. Barely making ends meet is not enough.”

“I have been a Virginia Tech graduate student since 2017, and attended VT as an undergraduate from 2005-2008. When I returned to Blacksburg, I was initially quite surprised at the increase in housing costs that had occurred since my time here as an undergrad. While I did manage to find an apartment in town to suit my needs, money was tight on my grad student stipend, and I was forced to find additional work to afford expenses, particularly since nearly 15% of our income goes directly back to the university for fees.

For two years of my schooling, I was fortunate enough to secure a fellowship which paid me double what departmental funding paid. I was able to focus exclusively on my studies and no longer stressed about having enough money for rent or over drafting my bank account. However, once this fellowship ended, I was forced to find new part time work in order to survive. I also could no longer afford to live in Blacksburg and had to move, first to Christiansburg and now to Roanoke. I do not have the luxury of having a partner, spouse, or family member who can financially support me. I live alone and pay my own rent and bills. In fact, last semester I was working 3 jobs to make ends meet, and ultimately burnt out and have since taken a Leave of Absence.

With the ever-increasing costs of housing that Blacksburg is seeing, the university MUST address the fact that graduate students make poverty wages and cannot afford housing in town. Additionally, national inflation has spiked other living costs such as utilities, food, etc. and the stipends are no longer acceptable.”
GOAL: For graduate students to be able to live on their assistantships

What does the resolution do?
1) Commits the university to provide a living wage to graduate students on assistantship by AY2023-2024 and establishes it as a university priority.
2) Charges a task force to develop a more in-depth financial plan for implementation and address logistical challenges with this university commitment.
3) Establishes a timeline and pathway for implementing this university value.

Why living wage?
A living wage is simply a commitment to provide necessary financial support to make sure that graduate students are supported during their duties without fears of food insecurity or lack of access to healthcare. While the term has been politicized in recent years, it is simply making sure that we are an institution that pays its graduate students enough to not be food or home insecure. It would be an adjustment in university priorities so we can establish a suitable baseline and don’t wind up back in this position in five years.

FAQ

Q: What about graduate students that are funded by external grants or fellowships?
A: If they make more than a living wage than they are already covered, but otherwise we will have to develop a hybrid contract format so that the university takes on some of those costs until grant organizations catch up to cost-of-living needs.

Q: Will this impact the number of graduate students we accept?
A: Graduate student enrollment continues to be a vital metric for the health of our graduate programs, and we do not expect this to resolution to negatively impact our enrollment. This is partly why this needs to be a university-wide mission. Competitive wages will make us significantly more desirable, so we expect an increase in applications and enrollment following implementation.

Q:
A:

Any other questions? Knowing about potential hurdles is helpful, but when you vote keep in mind that we don’t need to have all the answers now. This resolution would give us time to work through any potential challenges with a dedicated task force.
February 7, 2022

Overview of Graduate Assistantship Compensation

Graduate students who work as graduate assistants while pursuing their master’s or doctoral degrees provide a valuable service to the university. Many teach undergraduate classes while others support faculty in scholarly and sponsored research activities. To remain competitive in the recruitment and retention of high-quality graduate students, the university provides total compensation packages that are comparable with those offered by peer institutions.

The key components of the graduate student compensation package include stipend, tuition remission, and health insurance subsidy as outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Assistantship Compensation</th>
<th>In-State</th>
<th>Out-of-State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Base Stipend (9-month, 0.5 FTE)</td>
<td>$19,850</td>
<td>$19,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipend Supplement (1)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal Median Stipend</strong>(2)</td>
<td>20,250</td>
<td>20,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Remission</td>
<td>14,098</td>
<td>28,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;G Fee Remission (Technology &amp; Library Fees)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Fee Remission (A+D, BC, CALS, COE) (3)</td>
<td>0-2,000</td>
<td>0-2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance Subsidy (88% of total cost)</td>
<td>2,942</td>
<td>2,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Services Fee Remission (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0-550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(less) Comprehensive Fee Assessment (5)</td>
<td>(2,244)</td>
<td>(2,244)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(less) Commonwealth Capital &amp; Equipment Fee (5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(604)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Total Graduate Assistantship Compensation</strong></td>
<td>$35,226-$37,226</td>
<td>$48,939-$51,489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(1) Stipend supplement established in 2011 to offset a portion of university assigned charges such as the Health Fee. Supplement is incorporated into total stipend payment in graduate student paychecks.

(2) Annual graduate stipends vary based upon the responsibilities and complexities of individual appointments. The interquartile range (25th percentile to 75th percentile) of graduate stipends are between $19,233-$21,339 per year (9-month full-time).

(3) Program fees vary by academic program and are funded as part of tuition remission. Executive program fees are not eligible.

(4) Immigration Services Fee applies to international students and is funded as part of tuition remission.

(4) Commonwealth Capital & Equipment Fee is required of all nonresidents and is remitted to the state.

- The university stipend scale was increased by 5 percent in FY22, effective August 10, 2021, consistent with the statewide employee salary increase.
- The Governor’s Executive Budget proposal includes a 5 percent statewide employee and graduate assistant salary increase for FY23, pending the outcome of the 2022 General Assembly (currently in session).
Comments made in the Zoom chat for the February 7, 2022, University Council meeting

From Caitlin Cridland

Hello, my name is Caitlin Cridland and I am a graduate student from the Biochemistry Department. I fully support CGPS&P Resolution 2021-2022D to Institute a Living Wage for Graduate Students.

15:54:35 From Joanna Reinhold

Hello! My name is Joanna Reinhold, and I am a graduate student in the Biochemistry Department. I fully support CGPS&P Resolution 2021-2022D to Institute a Living Wage for Graduate Students. Thank you!

15:56:27 From Catherine Freed

My name is Catherine Freed and I am a graduate student from the Biochemistry Department. I fully support CGPS&P Resolution 2021-2022D to Institute a Living Wage for Graduate Students

15:58:36 From Gokce Onen

Comp fee was not included in the expenses.

15:59:07 From Kayla Kester

My name is Kayla Kester. I’m a PhD student in the biochemistry department at Virginia Tech and I have come to support this resolution.

15:59:34 From Derya Ipek Eroglu

Hello, I would like to express that the expense table of Joe does not reflect the reality. A lot of things are missing or underestimated in the table. Thank you!

16:01:26 From Shakiba Davari

It is also important to keep in mind that international students do not have work permission and are not allowed to have any other income. Also keep in mind that the currency difference makes sending money to the US even worse for many countries. So, unless if they are from an extremely rich family there is no possible way for them to make up for the low income.

16:06:00 From Menah Pratt-Clarke

That's my question: where is money coming from and what is impact on other university priorities?

16:07:01 From Damien P. Williams (He/Him)

The make-up of the taskforce proceeds from previous resolutions made by the GPSS, specifically giving space to the main stakeholder body.

16:07:59 From Damien P. Williams (He/Him)

proceeding from the disability justice axiom "nothing about us without us"
Hello, I would like to express that the expense table of Joe does not reflect the reality in Blacksburg. A lot of things are missing (comprehensive fee, technology expenses, etc.) or underestimated (groceries) in the table. It would be great if you can deliver this to the council, too. Thank you!

Hello, my name is Julia Montgomery and I am a graduate student from the Biochemistry Department. I fully support CGPS&P Resolution 2021-2022D to Institute a Living Wage for Graduate Students.

NoVA students tend to be working professionals getting graduate and professional degrees part-time.

Re: the problems of what is a living wage and how we accomplish that. It sounds like a great job for the task force...

Why should graduate students have to sacrifice a basic living standard for the future? We aren’t asking for a regular $50,000 job salary that we’d get post-graduation.

We’re asking for a basic living wage to live.

Meaning that their income is often already supplemented.

Also, international students cannot borrow and so Dr. Alwang’s solution does not hold for most international students.

I also want to add that we should also explore the impact of living wage for staff and AP professionals.

I think the immediate issue is that the current minimum pay for one student is not a living wage for one person in Blacksburg.

Sorry I may have missed it. But can we know what it takes for a graduate student to be on the task force?
Jeffrey Alwang’s opinion is extremely privileged. What he proposes, saying graduate students can take loans out while banking on the fact that their degree will put them on “an income path” to pay those loans back. MANY students from underprivileged backgrounds are unable to take out loans the way Alwang suggests BECAUSE OF THEIR BACKGROUND. And to suggest otherwise is to say that not being able to take out a loan to survive means one should not be in graduate school.

I understand the concerns of other council members related to the pre-defined Taskforce. But I would generally favor a membership that has substantial representation from graduate students. My concern is that some taskforce representation has consisted of those in administrative roles without the lived experience to support the work. This can lead to recommendations that lack “teeth”. Would it be possible to simply state it as “multiple members who are graduate students”? This might help to address the concerns from both sides.

International students are not even allowed to work other jobs. Can you imagine paying rent, bills, eating and medical expenses all on these wages? It is not too much to ask just for minimum wage or a little increase. The bottom line is graduate students are working professionals. The living wage ensures we are considered an important part of this community. Thank you.

Hi there was a comment about the proportion of graduate students in attendance in the zoom room and I was just wondering if we could use a reaction in the zoom room to get a count of the graduate student representation out of the total

People shouldn’t be penalized based on their major

Other universities offer 100% health insurance, dental, tuition remission, and fees and their stipend is a lot higher than ours

Tuition Remission is accounted for in the body and appendices of the resolution, as are negative impacts of fee structures on real wages and cost of living

In state versus out of state is a scam. No one told me that I could apply for in state tuition and I had to seek it out myself. When I did, I was told I had missed the deadline and will now have to pay out of state fees for a year even though I am eligible for in state rates.
Ken’s argument is the typical argument. We can’t even afford parking to work in our offices on campus.

16:22:41 From Roan Parrish (she/her)

I would like to add a comment that adding comprehensive health insurance and tuition remission does not address the lived experience of graduate students actively choosing between food, rent, and medicine. Additionally, supporting us such that we can live stably means we have time and resources to seek outside funding such as grants and fellowships, thus supporting the university through our work.

16:22:48 From Julia Armstrong

If you want to bring up in state versus out of state, then make sure students are at least aware of the difference.

16:23:51 From Lakshmi Miller (GPSS Senator-AOE dept)

The medical insurance "subsidy" feels harder on a 2-week grad paycheck vs other employees: in relevance to what Mr. Miller just spoke.

16:24:38 From Shannon Bradley to

Hi, I would like to know if those in opposition to having students sit on the task force have recently lived on the graduate student pay? In addition, comments have been made about taking out loans towards the education, and that currently I tried to take out loans for financial relief and I was denied. I am not able to just have a family member cosign on a loan for me, and I want to know if they recommend that I get a loan, will they cosign with me then?

16:25:10 From Bemnet Molla

Ken Miller mentioned that the tuition cost changes for in-state and out-of-state students. But the tuition remission considers every students tuition as in-state.. why is that??

16:26:25 From Leonardo Pavanatto

Stipends do not include comprehensive fees, which are quite expensive as well (in fact, they have been growing at a larger rate than what we are paid). Moreover, international students need to pay a lot of money to do an internship on the summer through co-op. That’s being penalized for not working for VT during summer, and should end.

16:27:35 From Dylan Powers

Once a graduate student completes classes, after approximately two years, then the students are not costing the university money via classes or tuition. At that point, where is that "tuition remission" going? Does this mean that those students after their second year, who have passed the educational requirements for their program, are deserving of less pay, if that "tuition remission" is considered to be included in the graduate students’ "compensation packages"?

16:27:50 From Damien P. Williams (He/Him)

Scare-quotes because "20 hours" can translate to an actual count of 60+ for some students, especially when lab work is expected.
16:28:23 From Julia Armstrong
   Thank you, Carla. This is embarrassing to witness, thank you for your support.

16:28:39 From Damien P. Williams (He/Him)
   Thank you very much Carla Finkielstein

16:29:06 From Xiaoying Li
   Good

16:29:15 From Alison Ritz
   THANK YOU CARLA!!!!!!

16:30:43 From Mohammad Khorrami
   Could you please ask about Comprehensive Fees? why we should pay for them?

16:32:07 From Dylan Powers
   Additionally, as mentioned, the health insurance is not comprehensive. Vision and dental
   is not included, and I still must pay for the service. You cannot say that it is included in the
   compensation of graduate students when it is objectively not included in our compensation. We
   must still enroll and pay for the insurance coverage.

16:32:21 From Satoru Emori
   From faculty's point of view, what Prof. Finklestein said just about sums it up. We cannot
   carry out high-quality, competitive scholarly work when many of our graduate students are
   having food insecurity.

16:36:20 From Damien P. Williams (He/Him)
   The benefit to hiring graduate students, beyond the moral imperative, remains the wider
   availability of graduate students, as a body of people familiar with both the labs and campus.

16:36:33 From Julia Armstrong
   Do you not understand how much of an investment in our country's future this is?
   Investing money in grad students means more local revenue generation and more educated
   members of a future workforce.

16:36:48 From Derya Ipek Eroglu
   Also, I think with this mentality, Young Kim should be at a teaching institution instead of
   an R1 institution. A graduate student's value cannot be measured by the money paid.

16:37:17 From Bemnet Molla
   If tuition remission is an expense to the university, who is paying who and how can
   whoever is paying agree to have a standard that anyone on assistantship is considered in-state
   for tuition cost?

16:42:29 From Ashley Dayer
I would like to add a written comment: As a faculty member and the Faculty Senator from the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation, I am in support of the creation of a Taskforce for a Living Wage. Our Department discussed living wages for graduate students at our faculty meeting this morning. While all of our students receive an assistanship amount higher than the mean for the university, the consensus among our faculty was that our student should be closer to the living wage. We also discussed how the MIT living wage might be a better benchmark to strive towards. https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/51121 This would be closer to $31,200. I would like to ask why this isn’t being used as the amount for discussion?

16:42:55 From Maruf Hoque

for the Cost of Living Report (I’m the author): the goal was to analyze expenses then compare the expenses to the dept/program average stipend

16:43:04 From Emily Keeble (she/her)

I just want to add a comment that I’m an international student who has been living in London prior to moving here. the rents, if I wanted to have the privilege of living alone as a human who is nearly 30, in Blacksburg are comparable to one of the most expensive cities in the world. The job I had in London was not anything with exceptional pay by any means. I am SIGNIFICANTLY worse off here than I ever was in London. Any savings I had will be completely gone by the end of my time here, even living with roommates. I am not legally allowed to get a job.

I recognise the university wants to keep all the money at the top by using underpaid graduate students with no training to teach subjects they have never studied to paying undergrads, but those graduate students would really love to eat too. I apologise for my tone with that last sentence, but this really is a case of my not being sure if I’m actually going to survive my PhD.

Comments received via email at the conclusion of the meeting:

From Evan Lavender-Smith

I serve on University Council and the Faculty Senate Cabinet as representative for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. I have not heard from a single person among my constituency in the Senate who opposes the idea of providing a living wage to VT graduate students. I have only heard of support for it. I also support it. I believe that providing more funding to our graduate students — as well as growing the number of our graduate students — is in the best interest of CLAHS and Virginia Tech. I sincerely hope that the UC and the CGPS&P can work together to make this happen. A living wage for our graduate students is a moral imperative.

From David Bruce

Some of the comments from council members were a bit tone deaf to the conversation being had during the discussion centered around the Living Wage Resolution. These comments indicate the need for grad students to be a powerful voice in any task force addressing the resolution as it may encounter some poorly reasoned initial reactions from some council members.
From Jane Abbate

As a senior faculty member, I want to strongly express my support for the Resolution to Institute a Living Wage for Graduate Students, to be discussed on February 21. I have observed our graduate students performing their teaching and research responsibilities at the highest professional level; they fully deserve a living wage. Moreover, providing a living wage to our student-employees is the very least we can do to live up to the values the University professes to uphold.

In addition, I support fair representation of graduate students on task forces that centrally concern their interests, as stated in the Resolution to Establish a University Policy Governing Task Forces and Working Groups (GPSS Resolution 2021-2022A). The absence of these key stakeholders is a recipe for bad policy. The graduate students have put in the work to understand the issues at stake and have demonstrated a mature and measured approach to resolving them.

From Ashley Shew

I have been chagrined as a faculty member and former Faculty Senate Representative to see the statement from the Faculty Senate Cabinet on the GPSS Living Wage Resolution, and even more disappointed in some of my colleagues for the way they are treating our graduate student colleagues. At no point was Faculty Senate consulted about the Response that Faculty Senate President Weiss has offered on our behalf. The one time senators were told (not consulted) about upcoming GPSS resolutions, it was to update us that cabinet was responding to these: at that time, senators asked for more information, and many had favorable opinions of the Task Force Resolution, which Prof. Weiss references in his Living Wage response, and on which he and his cabinet offered another negative response without consulting Faculty Senate. The lack of transparency around Faculty Senate Cabinet's decisions would be disappointing on a normal day, but alarming in the context of the important business at hand in the GPSS Living Wage Resolution.

In talking with faculty across several colleges, many of us are strongly in favor of the creation of the Living Wage Task Force and would love to see commitment to stakeholders and follow-through represented in this resolution. I would hate for Prof. Weiss's opinion to be taken to be representative of faculty. Many of us want to see our students paid fairly, and we recognize that a living wage would be an excellent recruiting and retention tool for top-notch graduate students. We also recognize that outside gigs, food insecurity, hardships set back students in time to degree, and cause them greater stress along the way too. We lose good students this way, and burn others out.

What the GPSS has put together in this resolution represents important data-gathering that I know they've worked years on, as well as a commitment to relevant stakeholders and the prudent use of a task force to study a situation toward practical implementation.
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List of Guests for the February 7, 2022, University Council meeting

Daniel Putnam
Julia Montgomery
Kenneth Distefano
Ellen Plummer
Darby McPhail
Anyelina Mangru
Cassie Becker
Reed Byg
Andre Jones Jr
Elliott Kunke
Mecaila McClune
Casey Gregory
Francesca Battista
William Snyder
Taylor Loy
Tara Frank
Brian Kohler
Ashleigh Hillen
Taylor McFadden
Aaron Brock
Courtney Walls
Steven Barnett
Benjamin Miller
Daniel Valmasei
Caroline Begley
Yulun Li
Ertugrul Baris Ondes
Amelia Loeb
Collin Gregg
Timothy Calhoun
Prashasti Agarwal
Whitney Woelmer
Kerry Gendreau
Cameron Lockett
Sapana pokhrel
Liev Birman
Sonal Jha
Jeremy Decker
Xin Zhang
Elizabeth Curtiss
Rachel Maizel
Rachel Holloway
Caleb Gore
Dhritiman Barman
Jennifer Kirsch

Christine Labuski
Emalee Money
Larissa Schneider
Molly Parker
Rick Sparks
Sara Cathey
Michael Holden
Jesse Janoski
Mary King
Alfred Agbekudzi
Lee Vinsel
Christian Runyon
Claudia Perez
Brittney Antous
Leonard Ohenhen
Christina Wheeler
Kayla Farrell
Audra Barnes
Kathryn Ratliff
Joshua Detwiler
Panagiotis Anastasiou
Hannah Glisson
Madison Pinko
Michael Wagnon
Warren Geither
Parul Sharma
Sarah Power
Isaac VanDiest
Samuel Beckenhauer
Julie Armstrong
Cairen Miranda
Debbie Greer
Khanh To
Gabriel Costa Borba
Megan Evas
Katie Wardinski
David Blankenship
Victor Lopez
Kristen Bretz
Avi Seth
Larry Luster
Angel Collins
Kandace Donaldson
Omotayo Oladele
Sally Shupe
List of Guests for the February 7, 2022, University Council meeting

Fernanda Vasquez-Valverde  Monika Gibson
Raymundo Hernandez  Noah Lyons
Mohannad Ismail  Aidan W. Murphy
Jasmine Johnson  Ada Warren
Kaiser Arndt  Mathirush Subramonia Pillai
Lakshmi Miller  Danna Agmon
Iliana Castillo  Sophia Vicente
Soni Ghimire  Emily Kim
Linea Cutter  Kit Friedman
Dylan G Powers  Maria Erazo
Liora O'Donnell Goldensher  Cris Thompson
Amy Nelson  Christian Heasley
Amanda Hensley  Garrett Harrison
David Bruce  Arinjoy Basak
Seohyun Park  Keaton Unroe
Kaustubh Deshmukh  Marissa Langager
Katrina Colucci  Jackie Zhu
Mary C Frazier  Troy Jaisohn Kim
Ashley Reed  Paige Van de Vuurst
Chuen Hei Chan  Jazmin Jurkiewicz
Landon Bilyeu  Jenna Catalano
Joanna Reinhold  Rachana Deven Somaiya
Stephen Plont  Basit Muhammad Imran
Cecelia Wood  Phil Olson
Julio Arroyo  Danielle Mullins
Jon Clark Teglas  Tsung-Yen Tsou
Frank Wanye  Alina Valop
Chloe Robertson  Bela Haifa Khairunisa
Catherine Grimes  Ocqua Gerlyn Murrell
Megan Moran  Aimane Najmeddine
Ipek Eroglu  Colin Kelly
Mychala Snead  Ami Schulte
Gavin Vess  Khadijah Al Safwan
John Barbish  Houston Chandler
Angel Collins  Daniel Smith
Naga Nitish Chamala  Sandeep K Jada
Ian Hines  Johanna Arredondo
Elizabeth Chishimba  Elizabeth Shupe
Amanda Burroughs  Marcela Johnson
Amy Ernstes  Dana Hawley
Emma Bueren  Cole Bristow
Carlo Canezo  Adam Masters
Sarah Aadahl  Ndidi Eyegheleme
Alayna Graves  Kelsey Reed
Ritish Shailly  Whitley Johnson
List of Guests for the February 7, 2022, University Council meeting

Clint Lanham
Amolpreet Kaur Saini
Dhruv Apte
Taylor Fossett
Morva Saaty
Philip Ray
Kayla Kester
Chelsea Buhler
Jungsoo Park
Ben Thomas
Noor Tasnim
Melanie Hempel
Earl Gilbert
Jessica DePaolis
Bradley Gobin
Cory Ilo
Minh Vu
Karim Youssef
Nazanin Sedaghatkish
Amanda Hashimoto
Joseph Taylor
Kaubstub Deshmukh
Joshua M. Rady
Chirag Gupta
Shakiba Davari
Erik Akbar
Lauren Fritsch
Brian Felipe Keith Norambuena
Awoke Kho bragade
Nicholas Wege Dias
Carlos Saint-Preux
Ibrahim Tahmid
Holly Kindsvater
Tung Xuan Le
Marcel Shams Eddin
Christian Heryakusuma
Sahaj Jain
Kregg Quarles
Mitra Bagheri
Srijeet Halder
Pouyan Shirzadian
Amber Kelly
Alex Fuge
Ryley C Harris
Saeid Alimoradi

Yuanqi Liu
Haylee Downey
Caiti-Erin Talty
Uwe C. Tauber
Ji uangtao Li
Robert Andrew Gustafson
Noushin Omidvar
William Jordan
Kathryn (Addie) Hayes
Akshay Dahiya
Damien P. Williams
Zuleka Woods
Caitlin Cridland
Jimmy Kaindu
Michael Hendrickson
Leah Ramnath
Angie De Soto
Paul J Risteca
Li qian Niu
Breana Turner
Ashley Dayer
Dhiraj Srivastava
Jonathan Charleston
Shashank Karki
Luke Goodman
Caroline de Jager
Sara Richards
Shaghayegh Valajan Navapour
Andrea Schuman
Amirah Wright
Gokce Onen
Col len Young
Cyri l Ayuk
Peter Gioia
Puspa Kamal Poudel
Luther McPherson
Sonal Jha
Morgan Wilson
Martin Etemadi
Darshit Patel
Jose Marc Madriaga
El ham Mohammadrezaei
Michael Teater
Emily Keeble
Parisa Farzeen
List of Guests for the February 7, 2022, University Council meeting

Annie Dubner
Haoyu Wang
Katherine Marhoefer
Sydney Johnson
Nila Masiourisaadat
Mikel Cawley
Rehesa Tarannum
Katherine Gorman
Betty Wilkins
Ankith Mohan
Mauro J. Caraccioli
Umme Fatema Piu
Chloe Moore
Jesse Garrett-Larsen
Chinmay Katke
Roghaiyeh Ansari
Quyen Do
Catherine Freed
Puspa Kamal Poudel
Rachel Bianculli
Jeremy Myslowski
Alexander Sandercock
Nick Copeland
Ayuk Cyril
Bikun Li
Meredith Martinez
Lois Kwane Kyei
Neslihan Genckal
Irem Sezer
Charles Sterling
Ezgi Kucukdeger
Zachary Benmamoun
Xin Zhang
Carmen Gitre
Satoru Emori
Geoffrey Omondi Otieno
Oziomachukwu Chinaka
Mohammad Khorrami
Mehmet Yardimci
London Russell
Amaryah Armstrong
Daniel Keku
Justin Kleiber
Sarah Healy
Elliana Vickers
Upali Bhattacharya
Elham Mohammadrezaei
Connor Herron
Eman Abdelrahman
Eileen Herbers
Linea Cutter
Madison Pinko
Meha Setiya
Natalia Varela
Ahmad Tourei
Brandy Ayesu-Danso
Megan Bronson
Grady Boyle
Saeed Behzadinasab
Frances Bennett Clark
Jacob Robinson
Carla López Lloreda
Arash Sarshar
Alexander Miele
Ramin Safavinejad
Niloufar Amiri
Theresa Libera
Saman Mohsenirad
Sshleigh Hillen
Saeed Sakhdari
Melissa Burt
Grace O'Malley
Brian Ruether
Nicole Nunoo
Vishvendra Rustagi
Nathan Folta
Eileen Herbers
Xiaoying Li
An Chi-He
Nandini Das
Zarley Rebholz
Faisal Adams
Taizoon Chunawala
Arinjoy Basak
Theresa Libera