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Graduate Council Minutes

Graduate Council

9-7-2023

Graduate Council Minutes - September 7, 2023

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

September 7, 2023

Members present: Thompson, P., (Graduate Council Chair), Abedi, R. (UTSI), Akerman, J., Alshibli, K., Ayo, A., Betteieb, A., Bowland, L., Castillo-Rodriguez, M., Cathey, A., Chen, J., Cho, M., Gao, Y., Geidner, N., Han, L., Hembree, D., Hewett, K., Higgins, P., Hines, M., Kaplan, G., Laursen, S. (Graduate Council Chair-Elect), Love, A., Lucio, R., Marshall, S., Maslar, D., McCord, R., Misawa, M., Montgomery, K., Newkirk, K., Ohnesorg, S., Ownley, B., Patrick, J., Rosenbaum, B., Schmidt, H., Scott, J., Skinner, C., Su, S., Summers, J., Trubee, K. (Graduate Student Senate President), Thompson, H. (Graduate Student Senate Vice President), Vogiatzis, K.

Ex-Officio members present: Ambroziak, K., Autry, C., Brothers, E., Cathey, A., Cheatham, M., Collins, C., Danquah, M., Dzikus, L., Higdon, M., McConville, B., Mercer, H., Odoi, A., Schaeffer, S., Scheb, J., Stier, J., Sullivan, M., Thompson, D., Tran, L., Zhao, X., Cox, C., Favier, G.

Guest: Haramule, J. (Office of the University Registrar), Hughes, J. (Office of the University Registrar), Mortensen, M. (Graduate Student Senator)

1. **Call to Order and Welcome** (Phyllis Thompson)

The Graduate Council Zoom meeting was called to order by Graduate Council Chair, Phyllis Thompson on Thursday, September 7, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.

2. **Minutes of the Preceding Meeting**

Thompson reported the April 13, 2023, Graduate Council Minutes were approved electronically on May 19, 2023.

3. **Welcome by Dean of the Graduate School** (Dixie Thompson)

4. **Office of the University Registrar** (Jake Haramule)

Haramule gave a demonstration of Curriculog, the new curriculum management system.

5. **Committee Reports:** No Reports

- **Academic Policy Committee** (Melissa Hines, chair)
- **Appeals Committee** (Siris Laursen, chair)
- **Curriculum Committee** (Sibyl Marshall, chair)
- **Student Faculty Research Awards** (Dixie Thompson)

6. **Administrative Reports and Announcements:**

Deans Update: (Dixie Thompson)

- Welcome to a new semester.
- We have excellent enrollment numbers for graduate and professional students. Fall 2023 enrollment is 7421. That is a 9.7% increase over fall 2022. Most colleges are experiencing growth, and some are seeing double-digit growth.
- August 30, 2023, the Graduate School hosted a Strategic Graduate Enrollment Management discussion. Representatives from all colleges were present to learn about trends in graduate education and ways that

we might consider developing a graduate enrollment management plan. This event was a continuation of discussions that have been happening across all colleges about where we have opportunities to grow and evolve our programs.

- The Graduate School hosted the New Graduate Student Orientation (Aug 15), New GTA Orientation (Aug 17) and a Community and Resource Fair (Aug 18). Approximately 450 new students attended the orientation; nearly 400 new GTAs attended; and around 400 attended the community and resource fair.
- The minimum graduate assistant stipend was increased effective August 1, 2023. The Chancellor made it a priority to make our minimum stipend levels reflect the cost of attendance. It will take 2 years to reach this level, so there will be another increase in August 2024.
- Our curriculum management system, Curriculog, is open and ready for use. There will be a learning curve with this new system, but it should ease the review and movement of proposals through the various steps of review. There will be a summary provided to the Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council prior to meetings. This will assist with the review process.

Graduate Student Senate Update: (K. Trubee, GSS President, H. Thompson, GSS Vice President)

- Katherine Trubee: I served as the GSS Technology Officer last year and I am in my fifth year as a Ph.D. student studying Comparative Political Science.
- Hannah Thompson: I served as the GSS Legislative Steering Committee chair last year and I am in my third year as a Ph.D student studying the early care and education workforce and trauma informed care.
- Orientation Week
 - During Orientation Week, the Graduate Student Senate helped welcome over 2600 new graduate students to UT. Trubee spoke during the New Graduate Student Orientation and the New Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation.
 - We revived and revamped an Orientation Mixer social event to welcome new and returning students. We partnered with the community's Change Center and were able to reach nearly 100, primarily new students through the use of Student Programming and Services Funds through the Division of Student Life.
 - The GSS Coordinator, Nick Jakel with the Graduate School, coordinated and planned the Graduate Community Resource & Engagement Fair. GSS supported the Fair by providing volunteers and hosting a booth. It was very successful and a wonderful way to engage graduate students before the academic year.
- Senate
 - With college and department restructuring, we have 104 senators for full participation this year. We have 90 senators reported so far but are still waiting to hear from Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (2), Theatre (2), Accounting and Information Management (2), Finance, Management & Entrepreneurship (2), Material Science & Engineering (2), Veterinary Medicine (2), and the Space Institute.
 - Our first Senate session of the year was held on Thursday, August 31st. We had a full room with several members of the public attending to comment and 87 senators in attendance. For simplicity's sake, we've chosen to have all Senate meetings of the year on Thursday evenings and use a live, running agenda which can be found at tiny.utk.edu/2324gssagendas. We've also introduced committee breakout portions of the Senate Sessions which will hopefully provide an opportunity for increased committee participation and action, particularly once some of the initial complications related to hybrid meetings are worked out.
 - At our first meeting, we held several votes to establish committees, confirm executive and external committee members, and passed an Open letter on the Vision of the 2023-2024 Graduate Student Senate where we outlined our goals for the year to increase our advocacy efforts as well as build community and engagement among graduate and professional students.
 - Again, this year, we will be facilitating travel awards. We have \$350,000 from the graduate school and Dean Thompson to support graduate students with travel for academic conferences. We've begun this process and will provide regular updates throughout the year.

- Visibility
 - An additional goal this year is to continue the good work of previous GSS leaders in increasing the awareness and visibility of the organization. We've been highlighting our social media presence this year and seen a 43% increase in our Instagram followers in the last month.
 - We've also started a new initiative to make GSS more well understood and accessible on campus by holding Office Hours on Fridays. We're trying to build awareness of our office space in the Student Union but also holding visiting Office Hours at campus partner offices around campus.
- Graduate Student Life
 - The Division of Student Life is acknowledging the impact of the Graduate Student Senate and making moves to promote additional Graduate and Professional Student Programming. In the next month or so, we'll be working with them to have our executive committee act as a focus group to provide insights which will improve the graduate-focused programming they create.
 - We've also been using our social media presence to share details about events with GSS and other student organizations as well as campus and community events. We're starting a Grad Night Out series of benefit nights at local restaurants which will allow graduate and professional students to engage with the community while connecting with their peers.
 - In the near future, we'll start working to plan events for Homecoming and GPSAW in the Spring as well.
- As a final note, we want to recognize the hard work by Dr. Dixie Thompson, the Provost, those on this committee, and other administrators to secure the recent increase in graduate stipends. This cost of attendance adjustment will have such a meaningful impact on many of our graduate students who struggle the most. While there is more work to be done, this step in the right direction is welcomed and appreciated.

Graduate Council Chair (Phyllis Thompson)

- P. Thompson thanked our Past Chair, Laurie Meschke, for her assistance transitioning into the new role as Graduate Council Chair.
- P. Thompson thanked and welcomed Siris Laursen from Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, announcing his new role as Chair-Elect.
- P. Thompson reminded all attendees to add the Council meeting dates that were sent out in the meeting invite email to their Calendars. Thompson added that the next meeting is on September 28th, 2023.
- Council voting: P. Thompson instructed members to look for emails from Catherine Cox with the voting link to approve the Minutes of our Graduate Council Meetings.

Are there any items from the floor for consideration? With no items coming forward, this meeting will be adjourned. We will now transition to Breakout Rooms where our sub-committees will have a brief meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Cox
Graduate Council Liaison