Graduate and Professional Student Association

The Pennsylvania State University

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| GPSA 71st Assembly Minutes | Wednesday, April 14, 2021 | 6:00 PM | Zoom |

**Actions Items:**

* Let President Schönn Franklin know if you are:
  + Interested in being or continuing being a liaison for next year
  + Know of anyone who would be good for filling vacancies (esp. GPSA Faculty Senator, Grad Council, delegate positions)
  + Want to be on the UP Student Fee Board next year
* Let Schönn know also if you have questions or feedback for the Next Gen Penn State group that is soliciting feedback for the next Penn State University President
* Let Star Sharp know if you have any issues or agenda items you’d like brought up for the next Faculty Senate meeting or for next year’s agenda

**Business Conducted:**

* Sandeep Krishnakumar, College of Engineering delegate, was elected as Speaker of the Assembly
* Bill 71-01: Ride Vouchers to COVID-19 vaccination sites was passed

**Agenda**

1. Meeting called to order at 6:02 PM
2. Roll Call – See Appendix I
3. Adoption of the Agenda
   1. **Claire** – amend agenda to include Star Sharp’s name for Faculty Senate report, seconded and accepted
   2. **Hannah** – motion to approve agenda, seconded, accepted
4. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes from March 31, 2021
   1. **Niladri** – move to approve, seconded and passed
5. Open Student Forum
   1. **No comments**
6. Special Presentation: **Dr. Michael F. Verderame, Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School**
   * 1. Grad Education in the Fall 2021
        1. Intend to be back fully in person for instruction
        2. Will depend on the conditions at the moment, but with the vaccinations ramping up there is a prospect we will be back fully
        3. Challenges
           1. Domestic students with health issues who can’t attend in person
           2. International students with health or visa issues who can’t attend in person
           3. At the present time, PSU can’t offer remote synchronous classes (also impractical for international students abroad)
           4. Complex interplay between DoE, Middle States accreditation, and PSU policies around offering remote synchronous courses, but this won’t happen by Fall 2021
           5. Graduate School classes are small to begin with

Most will be able to come back, very few students per class will be unable to attend

* + - * 1. For Fall 20-Spring 21 there were 751 graduate classes who had at least 1 out of country students enrolled

Highest of out of country enrollment was only 13 students

Over 300 had only 1 out of country enrolled

At the end of the day, most classes would have smaller enrollment

* + - * 1. PSU World Campus has a good reputation for online classes, but even with their resources it’s not possible to create a huge number of quality asynchronous graduate courses

Consider the educational value for the only student in these courses

Or being the out of country student and being the only remote asynchronous student in all of their courses

However, potentially exploring adding a remote asynchronous section that can be joined easily to in-person sections

* + - * 1. For many international students, Optional Practical Training (OPT) is very important, and requires two consecutive semesters of in-person enrollment

If they take another remote semester, many master’s students will not qualify for OPT

* + - * 1. Grad School working very hard with World Campus and Graduate Programs to provide a quality education to as many graduate students as they can in the fall
    1. Long Term Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic
       1. As of yesterday, applications to the Graduate School, offers of admissions to graduate programs, acceptance of offers by graduate students, all are up across the Graduate School
       2. Except for Penn State Hershey, all 3 numbers are up
       3. Penn State remains a strong choice for high quality graduate education
       4. Graduate School has made it clear that programs should prioritize current students
          1. The consequence of that in some (not common) programs recruited fewer new students to support current students

Fewer TAs and RAs going forward

* + - 1. Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) premiums will decrease by 2% vs 10% across the Commonwealth of PA
    1. **Questions and Comments**
       1. **Niladri** – When you say a class doesn’t have more than 13 graduate students do you mean a course taught by grad students or a batch? Given the plan is to go back fully in person in Fall 2020, for those who can’t make it is PSU going to not admit them or defer them
          1. **Answer**: Individual students in a course, meaning the number of students would be abroad in the fall is very small. For admissions/defer, that will be a very individual decision, the Starfish program for graduate students to alert that they can’t come, their program and adviser both get notifications that the student can’t come, so they can explore opportunities: 1) World Campus remote asynchronous sections, 2) leave of absence for continuing students, 3) deferring for new students
       2. **Shah** – How many of the applications/admissions/acceptances have been minorities or students of color?
          1. **Answer**: Up significantly in several large categories
       3. **Ali** – Can you talk more about domestic immunocompromised students?
          1. **Answer:** Will have the same opportunities as international students, they’re being created for any students who can’t come back for any reason. The expectation is that the largest group will be international students. Chinese students receiving visas is a tremendous challenge, consulates making appointments only in August, some being cancelled, if you can’t get one by July it’s a big problem. Indian students should be able to get visas/get here, except last Friday the Mumbai embassy closed due to rise in COVID-19 cases. Collectively these two groups make up 2/3 of our international students
       4. **Ali** – With Starfish, is there a cutoff? Can be done any point up until the start of the semester? What if student’s sense of safety changes during the semester
          1. **Answer:** Starfish data doesn’t commit students, it’s a planning tool. The sooner everyone knows the easier it is to plan. For those who get here and feel uncomfortable, at the moment most likely option is leave of abscence
       5. **Niladri** – Regarding double counting courses for graduate minors and degrees. Whatever decision is being made, will it be retroactive?
          1. **Answer:** For last 5 years, Graduate Council has been working through all of the policies for the 4 categories of graduate degrees. Whatever policies when you enrolled apply, new policies only apply to new students entering the minor.

1. Executive Officer Reports
   1. President – Schönn Franklin
      1. Congratulations to everyone on their election win, thanking everyone who served and continues to serve in another capacity.
      2. Thanks to Alex Zhao for making the transition easy
      3. If you are a liaison or want to be a liaison, email or Slack me about next year
      4. Vacancies
         1. Graduate Council
         2. GPSA Faculty Senator
         3. A lot of delegate seats open as well
         4. Please in general consider individuals to fill vacancies
      5. Student Fee Board concludes interviews tomorrow for at-large applications
         1. Claire Kelling has agreed to be a GPSA member
         2. If you are interested please let Schönn know
      6. Presidential search has begun
         1. Student Leader Roundtable focus group
         2. Will have follow up meeting with Next Gen Penn State and they’ll have a follow up with us, if you have any questions for them please let me know
   2. Vice President – No Report, Vacant
   3. Treasurer – Matt Billups
      1. Will be putting certain instructions and references in a shared folder about purchasing things and buying things for GPSA events, and how to hire someone to provide a service for the GPSA
         1. Services are a contract process that will be more involved
      2. Feel free to reach out to Matt about planning events, will be seeing the legislation a few days before to review for the financial aspect
   4. Secretary – Alex Zhao
      1. Please let me know if mispronouncing delegates’ names or if delegates enter the meeting after attendance has been taken.
      2. Sending out the newswire tomorrow, please submit any event announcements or graphics by noon.
   5. Faculty Senate – Star Sharp
      1. last Faculty Senate meeting is April 27, if there’s any concerns please let her know
      2. Also call for agenda items for next year
   6. Graduate Council – Claire Kelling
      1. Graduate Council met today
      2. GSFI met today – finalized plans for family leave for graduate students
      3. Ombuds program applications are out, please let Claire know of anyone who would be a good resource for graduate students
      4. Yield time to **Ali** for general meeting
         1. Phase 2 moved up, as of yesterday April 13 anyone can request a vaccine
         2. Penn State is approved as a regional vaccination space
         3. GCAC received a lot of feedback around the double counting for courses, especially from GPSA, and so any changes/policies will not be in place until at least the fall
         4. Family/medical leave policies will be visited in the fall
         5. Grad Expo went especially well, discussion about keeping it in a virtual session
         6. Listening session for graduate students about the impact of COVID-19 pandemic
            1. By discipline so they can be very specific
            2. Make sure student voices are heard across a wide range of concerns
      5. **Questions**:
         1. **Niladri** – Bottom line what is the change going to be?
            1. **Answer:** Very unclear, policy voted to be sent back, still trying to get feedback but will not be voted on until the fall
         2. **Nico** – Penn State is a mass vaccination location, does that mean there’s a new form?
            1. **Answer**: that was not discussed
            2. **Eli** – Can find different providers of vaccinese in Slack channel, please share
            3. **Alex** – GPSA website has list of links for registering for vaccines, please also share with your constituents
2. Election of Speaker of Assembly
   1. **Yasha** – nominates Sandeep Krishnakumar for Speaker, he was part of the 70th Assembly, has spoken to Yasha (former Speaker) about what the job entails, last Assembly he was always on his game for his work and focused on his mission to helping graduate and professional students
   2. **Claire** – can you describe the role of the Speaker?
      1. **Yasha** –sets the agenda, meets with VP about special presentations, meets with committee chairs to get a sense of what legislation will be presented at the next Assembly meeting
   3. **Julia** – Second Yasha’s motion
   4. **Sandeep** – Thank you Yasha for the nomination. I am a 2nd year PhD candidate in Industrial Engineering. I have served as the delegate in the previous Assembly and worked on the Advocacy and Diversity committee and worked on the new Climate Action subcomittee. As a Speaker I would like to take on the role of representing the Assembly and ensuring that everything flows smoothly and ensuring that all the committees and delegates have the resources they need to be the best advocates for their students. I have some pretty big shoes to fill but I am up for the job.
   5. **Discussion**
      1. **Ali** – Want to echo what was said earlier about Sandeep’s work on A&D last year, he was very active and very committed and I want to lend him my support
      2. **Eli** – Want to second Ali, Sandeep has shown a lot of initiative
      3. **Claire** – motion to approve Sandeep by roll call
   6. **Sandeep is confirmed as Speaker by a vote of 21 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain – See Appendix II**
3. Bill 71-01: Ride Vouchers to COVID-19 vaccination sites
   1. **Yasha** -- Vaccines are now open to everyone, this bill provides up to 2 rides for $25 total for 200 students
   2. **Questions** 
      1. **Claire** – do we need to remove Johnson and Johnson since it’s not being administered?
         1. Yasha – didn’t include names of vaccines except maybe in purpose of situation
      2. **Matt** – need 4 rides total (2 back and forth)
         1. **Yasha** – should be enough for back and forth in State College
         2. **Alex** –Can specify number of uses of code
      3. **Sandeep** – the amount should be $5000
         * 1. **Yasha** – Yeah, (**Sandeep** will make motion)
      4. **Travis** – are we excluding people outside of the State College area? Don’t know how many students might be not in State College but don’t want to exclude
         1. **Yasha** – did this based on previous bills, but if we can include outside Centre County that would be good
         2. **Claire** – Lyft tickets were to certain places only?
         3. **Alex** – can remove geofence but then can be used anywhere
         4. **Nico** – for those outside Centre County we don’t know the cost/distance/geography/other issues so providing outside Centre County would be difficult
      5. **Elham** – are these for only students or families of students?
         1. **Yasha** - Funds come from Penn State so codes would only be for Penn State students
      6. **Niladri** – only certain sites?
         1. **Alex** – There are more than 5 sites so we’ll have to have a conversation
   3. **Discussion**
      1. **Matt** – these codes should be location specific just so that they’re used for their intended purpose, include the BJC, some nearby big ones, if not limited it would leave our dollars to be taken advantage of. I’m a little confused by how much it is
         1. **Yasha** – shouldn’t limit to locations and with vaccinations hard to come by don’t want this to be difficult for people
         2. **Sandeep** – could ask them to upload a picture of their appointment, **motion to amend amount requested to $5000** – seconded
      2. **Nico** – responding to chat about busses to BJC, shouldn’t consider if we’re talking about accessibility, just by the fixed cost we’re going to have some considerations
      3. **Niladri** – agree with Sandeep, restricting to a few locations is going to be a headache, if people can upload appointment can get code
      4. **Star** – took the bus out to Lewistown to get vaccine, but even if this is a flat rate I think it would be good, having some kind of proof would curb abuse
      5. **Lauren** – want to echo Star, restriction on location probably not the best, would add unnecessary barriers, we just need to have some faith in the graduate and professional student community that they won’t abuse these codes
      6. **Eli** – want to echo not restricting location, people who are far away are most in need, would’ve cost $140 to Lyft back and forth from my vaccine appointment
      7. **Claire** – motion to adopt bill by roll call, seconded
      8. **Bill passes with 22 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain – See Appendix II**
4. Reports
   1. Speaker of the Assembly – Yasha
      1. No report
   2. Advocacy and Diversity – **Eli**
      1. A&D did a lot last Assembly
      2. Advocacy for disabled students
      3. Work regarding racial justice
      4. Mental health
         1. **Alex** – update on mental health testimonials?
            1. **Answer**: collected, figuring out how to distribute it to faculty, plan is video but not final
      5. **Ali** – follow up to GPSA town hall (connecting during COVID-19) event was really good last fall
   3. Professional Development – **Niladri**
      1. Dissertation writing bootcamp – complete
         1. Online group for giving students a time to sit down and write what they need to, special presentations
         2. **Star** – Niladri and prof dev did a really good job on the writing boot camp
      2. LinkedIn workshop
      3. Illustrator workshop
      4. Professional headshot event
   4. Programming – **Lauren**
      1. Grad Cup – students created teams and competed among themselves in events, usually field day but this year focused more on wellness, game nights
      2. Trivia night, virtual pottery night, virtual crafting night
      3. **Nico** - Remote chocolate tasting, coffee hours, other food and beverage events, been a busy year for committee, more different for programming than other committees
      4. **Matt** – trivia night
   5. Community Outreach – **Alex**
      1. Pollinator garden volunteer event, planned Clearwater Conservancy event, Red Cross cosponsor, Climate Action is subcommittee
      2. **Julia** – takeout night
      3. **Yasha** – Climate Action: herb planting kit pickup in the next couple of weeks
   6. Internal Development – **Schönn**
      1. Focused on internal structure of GPSA and compliance with University policy
      2. ByLaw and Constitutional amendments – executive session for Assembly, adjusting for COVID-19
5. Liasion Reports
   1. **Julia** – Night of Remembrance planning, held on April 29th, to honor students who have passed away over the past 2 years, bringing some legislation to cosponsor the event with other student governments for virtual livestream
   2. **Alex** –Transportation Advisory Committee met, considering increasing RidePass cost, doing some RFP for micromobility, new parking deck opening
      1. **Niladri** – Is it open to grad students?
         1. **Answer**: Willl find out
6. Judiciary – The Honorable Sam Atland
   1. Thank Emily Lesher for running the recent election, congratulations on graduating soon
   2. **Schönn** – Emily has been amazing
7. Student Trustee – Bryan Culler
   1. Not at meeting
8. Advisor – Adam Christensen
   1. Congratulations to everyone, like seeing some new and some old faces, here to help in any way that he can
9. Comments for the Good of the Order
   1. **Schönn** – once again congrats on your election and thank you for serving your constituents, if you are interested or know of people interested in liaison or vacant position please email me or Alex or Slack us, also raise your hand before speaking
   2. **Yasha** – fill out the absence form, find a proxy if you can’t make it, also congratulations, as new delegates this is sometimes confusing, please reach out, GPSA can’t run wihtout teamwork
10. Meeting adjourned at 7:39 PM

**Appendix I**

U= Unexcused Absence E= Excused Absence P= Present L= Late

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **4/14/2021** |
| **Executive Board** |  |
| Schönn Franklin | P |
| Alex Zhao | P |
| Matthew Billups | P |
| Ali Watts | P |
| **Judiciary** |  |
| Sam Altland | P |
| Emily Lesher | P |
| **Graduate Council** |  |
| Claire Kelling (Science) | P |
| Katie Warczak (Liberal Arts) | P |
| Jalen Jeter (SIA) | P |
| Hannah Nolte (Engineering) | P |
| **Assembly** |  |
| Travis Russell | P |
| Ashley Smalls | P |
| Elham Rahimi | P |
| Yasha Duggal | P |
| Nico Terry | P |
| Seongryeong Yu | E |
| Sandeep Krishnakumar | P |
| Lauren Katch | P |
| Niladri Sekhar Mandal | P |
| Haroula Tzamaras | P |
| Brooke Mattern | P |
| David Desmet | P |
| Matt McGee | P |
| Maria Isabel Da Silva | P |
| Julia Keliher | P |
| Nora Tucker | P |
| Sherif Olanrewaju | P |
| Shaheed Soligné | P |
| Megan Minnich | E |
| Eli Fields | P |

Of 24 Assembly delegates (including Graduate Council members), 22 were in attendance, 2 were excused absences, quorum was met (12 are required for quorum)

**Appendix II**

U= Unexpected Absence E= Excused Absence A= Abstain Y=Yes N= No

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| **Office** | **Name** | **Speaker of the Assembly (Sandeep)** | **Bill 71-01** |
| **Graduate Council** |  |  |  |
| Graduate Council | Claire Kelling (Science) | Y | Y |
| Graduate Council | Katie Warczak (Liberal Arts) | Y | Y |
| Graduate Council | Jalen Jeter (SIA) | Y | Y |
| Graduate Council | Hannah Nolte (Engineering) | Y | Y |
| **Assembly** |  |  |  |
| Agricultural Sciences | Travis Russell | Y | Y |
| Communications | Ashley Smalls | Y | Y |
| Earth and Mineral Sciences | Elham Rahimi | Y | Y |
| Eberly College of Science | Yasha Duggal | Y | Y |
| Eberly College of Science | Nico Terry | Y | Y |
| Education | Seongryeong Yu | E | E |
| Engineering | Sandeep Krishnakumar |  | Y |
| Engineering | Lauren Katch | Y | Y |
| Engineering | Niladri Sekhar Mandal | Y | Y |
| Engineering | Haroula Tzamaras | Y | Y |
| Health and Human Development | Brooke Mattern | Y | Y |
| Health and Human Development | David Desmet | Y | Y |
| Information Sciences and Technology | Matt McGee | Y | Y |
| Inter-Collegiate Degree Program | Maria Isabel Da Silva (Isabel) | Y | Y |
| Inter-Collegiate Degree Program | Julia Keliher | Y | Y |
| Liberal Arts | Nora Tucker | Y | Y |
| Nursing | Sherif Olanrewaju | Y | Y |
| School of International Affairs | Shaheed Soligné (Shah) | Y | Y |
| School of Law | Megan Minnich | E | E |
| School of Law | Eli Fields | Y | Y |
|  | Yes (Y) | 21 | 22 |
|  | No (N) | 0 | 0 |
|  | Abstain (A) | 0 | 0 |