Minutes

Graduate Student Senate Meeting

Date: Thursday, April 23, 2020  
Time: 8:00 PM  
Location: Remote Locations  
Attendees: Senators and general public

A. Call to Order— 8:00 PM
   a. Meeting Begins at 8:05 PM
   b. Approval of prior meeting minutes

B. Call of the Roll

C. Special Guest – Dr. David Fleming, Dean of the Graduate School

D. Executive Reports- President, Vice President. Chief of Staff, Pro-Tempore
   a. Dr. Fleming
      i. Tuition Freeze
         1. Intended for undergraduates, not graduates
         2. Planning to freeze most graduate tuition anyway
      ii. Degree extensions
         1. Clemson does have a policy regarding time to degree at the master’s and doctoral levels. The limit at the master’s level relates directly to coursework whereas the doctoral level is time delimited. Master’s degree students have six years to complete their program of study or the courses start to “roll off.” In other words, a course completed 10 years ago cannot be automatically applied to a masters’ degree program of study.
         2. However, we have a revalidation process that can permit it to be included. Currently, a master’s level student can request up to six credits beyond the six-year limit to be considered for revalidation. In such cases, the course needs to have remained as a current course and there needs to be an assessment to ensure that the student retains an expected level of knowledge for the course.
         3. Partly in response to the current COVID-19 crisis, I forwarded a policy
recommendation to the Graduate Advisory Committee to eliminate the credit hour limit to this policy. In this way, the “time to degree” for master’s degree students can be expanded and include approval for more than 2 courses and a longer time period. That policy was passed by the Graduate Advisory Committee last week and is being forwarded to the Graduate Council for review. I would expect to have this fully approved before it would need to be implemented in response to issues that master’s degree students may be facing this term.

4. The doctoral time to degree is delimited to 8 years. However, this was a policy that was passed only a couple years ago. As such, many doctoral students matriculated when the previous policy was in effect (i.e., five years past the comprehensive exam).

5. As such, we have reached out to all doctoral students approaching and passing the 8-year time limit and offered extensions with two requirements: 1) specific and detailed timeline to completion and 2) memo of support from the major advisor. To date, I have not denied any extensions that have included these two items. I intend to continue these exceptions with a plan and advisor support and would include the challenges associated with the COVID-19 crisis as a valid reason to extend that time.

6. This is accommodating students who came in with an old policy- allowing extensions with a detailed timeline to finish.

7. **Funding:** Institutions and systems have different requirements as it relates to time limits on assistantship funding. For example, the University of California system limits graduate assistantships to 6 years. It would make sense to me for graduate students there to request that the limit be extended.

8. However, the Graduate School at Clemson does not have a time limit for assistantship support and I am not interested in pursuing that. From my perspective, if a doctoral student is looking to finish their program in their 7th year (within the 8-year window) and has done an admirable job in their assistantship duties such that the program and department wants to retain them for a 7th year, it would not make any sense to me to create a policy that would prohibit it. In other words, if a Clemson graduate student is making appropriate progress towards their degree and has program or PI support to keep them on assistantship, I would not support an arbitrary expiration date (e.g., six years) for that support.

Questions:

*Senator Baker: Is the current pandemic the only reason for the freeze? Is there any consideration to continue the freeze to beyond the next academic year?*

*A: I cannot speak to the reasons for the undergrad freeze, but the rationale for the graduate freeze was part of an overall plan because of current circumstances. I do not know if the tuition freeze will continue. Those decisions will likely be made over the summer. Everything is on the table right now.*

*Senator Moses: The freeze was based on undergraduate? Should graduates expect a freeze?*

*A: The message sent out today was directed at undergraduates for in-state and out-of-state fees. Most graduate programs rates will remain the same, but it varies and is hard to say.*
Senator Hunter: *Is the extra year of funding a university decision or a department decision?*

A: The graduate GTA’s slots are program area decisions. The selection of those who fill those positions are made by the department and funded by the provost. I am working with the team working on what we will be doing in the fall, and I have expressed the need for more TA slots centrally. For example, if we had to implement social distancing and increase the number of courses, we can bring on more TA’s and assistantships to cover those courses, even if it is just for a temporary period.  

Senator Allam: *Will there be any reduction in lab fees or overall premier per credit fees if the classes move online?*

A: ICar is an entrepreneur program, so they dictate their own tuition. As of now, there is a freeze so tuition will remain the same as it was this year.

I. **President, Kaitlyn Samons**

A. I hope you are all staying safe. Please do not ever hesitate to email me if you need anything.

B. I have met with a number of people since the 9th. At this point, I have waited to post what I would be speaking about today until I was certain who was going to be our speaker. So, please forgive me for the late posting on the meeting minutes.

C. At this point, I have been contacted by almost all of my committees about persons who are interested in taking over as external directors next year. Parking and Facilities is the one committee, currently, whom I have no transition for. If you are interested, please reach out to me.

D. I remotely joined a meeting with the Graduate Council on the 16th, and Robert O’Hara, *blessedly, because I was at McAlister’s* posted his notes on the Discord App. Please let me know if you would like a follow-up to anything in that document and Robert, or myself, will be happy to reach out and get further clarifications.

E. I have joined the ITSAB committee, and encourage you all to look into the work they are doing. They are a wonderful and strong group of student advocates, and if not the 20-21 year, then think about joining to give further Graduate student representation in the following years.

F. On April 15th, John Porter, Amir, Bridget, Dr. Poole, and myself met with Lisa Bona. In this meeting, we discussed budgets for the up-and-coming year. At this point, we are completely uncertain of how our budget will look, but we were absolutely assured that we are in no position of deficit. The loss of $21,917 made a dent, but we still have funds in the account.

G. I will not discuss the ongoing discussions within the committee meetings I have joined, because my directors can speak to them better than myself, but please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions. It has been a pleasure serving as your Vice President and President, and I will continue to do my best throughout the Summer and the next year. Once more, my phone number is
954-483-8636 and my email is ksamons@g.clemson.edu if you need anything or anyone has a question from your program that I might be able to help.

II. Vice President, John Porter III
   A. Senator Interest Form 2020-2021
      1. https://forms.gle/R6FzLmfhHEDZS5H47

   B. All internal committees have strong candidates for directors next year EXCEPT Activities Director and Communications Director/Secretary
      1. If you are interested in either of these positions, please reach out to me @ jjporte@clemson.edu

   C. Plans for a stronger and more informative GSG website are in the works, so be on the lookout for:
      1. Publishing of important meetings between exec members and administration
      2. Records of pertinent issues brought up by senators and the progress being made on those issues

III. Sohan Nair, Greenville Council Vice President

As promised on Friday, I looked into the mental health situation at ICAR and found the following 3 things:

1. Most of the internationals have taken ISO health insurance which provides coverage for CareConnect which includes a free behavioral health assessment and provides access to a licensed professional. I am not sure how much of this is free.
2. ICAR seems to have a tie-up with Crisis Text Line. I have contacted them multiple times and found that they are a free service which has a bunch of volunteers. These volunteers usually are unaware of how to deal with situations and just provide links to web pages which have resources targeting different scenarios and how to overcome them.
3. We received an email recently from CAPS offering free psychiatric and counselling services through phone or video conference. However, this is only until 8th of May.

4. As a student in good mental health (I assume), I could only find these resources. Are there any other services available? And are students not allowed to get depressed in Summer until CAPS is available again?

5. I guess @Naga Venkata Sai Teja Allam suggested sometime earlier that we could have student volunteers trained for this very purpose which would prove to be a good employment option.
6. Another suggestion was to hire a couple of people with experience in counselling as student coordinators so they could step in and hold sessions if required.

Dr. Poole: *Virtual services through May is an additional service offered due to remote learning. They were waiving the health fee since they were not having to come to campus. CAPS does not close during the summer, it is open year round.*

Senator Patel: *Look into NAMI- they have an Anderson-Oconee division*

Senator Knight: *Graduate students have access to Deer Oaks. It is an employee assistance program that covers things, such as mental health services. Being GA’s, we have three free sessions through the program. I’m thinking the information is on the Clemson site, but please reach out to me if you have questions and I can follow-up.*

D. **Pro-Tempore, Sarah Beadle**

- Congrats to the GSG Achievement Awards Winners- 118 nominations reviewed and rated (without names) by 5 committee members from different colleges:
  - Outstanding Master’s Thesis: Courtney Linder
  - Outstanding Dissertation: Katie Jurewicz
  - Outstanding Graduate Assistant: Abby Dill
  - Outstanding Research Assistant: MD Zadid Khan
  - Outstanding Teaching Assistant: Fengjiao Zou
  - Outstanding Teacher of Record: John Sherwood
  - Excellence in Engagement and Social Advocacy: Shakaila Laribo
  - Excellence in Outreach: Tatiana Estrada-Wrege
  - Excellence in Leadership: Bridget Blood
  - Outstanding Graduate Student Organization: Clemson Indian Student Association
  - Outstanding Graduate Student Advocate: Dr. Rachelle Savitz

D. **Chief-of-Staff, Emily Knight**

E. **Internal Committee Reports**

a. Communications, Hillary Smith

b. Graduate Travel Grants, Bridget Blood and Kathy Elhert

  i. Summer application period closed and we had 72 completed applications, award announcements are on hold until we have approval from Dean Fleming

  ii. Yash Srivastava and Stephanie Klaubert will be taking our positions as Applicant-Reviewer Chair and Awards Chair, respectively

  iii. Our committee will continue to work over the summer on three
projects: 1) continuing receipt validation, 2) to ensure the new website is up to standards, and 3) to match our applicant manual to the new website format

c. Activities, Laura Huff and Murwan Siddig

d. Rules and Procedures, Sarah Beadle
   i. We have 4 pieces of legislation up for a vote today
   ii. Kien and I made a powerpoint to help with training Senators on legislative process in the fall

e. Research Initiatives, Apurva and Erik
   i. Worked on making a guide for the next committee
   ii. No other updates.

f. Finance, Amir Malek
   i. Budget for 2019-2020 Academic Year

F. External Committee Reports
   a. University Services, Travis Roberts
      i. Hayley Hoover will be taking over as Chair next year.
      ii. Campus Rec meeting tomorrow (4/24). Will be bringing up the issue of re-opening the Clemson Experimental Forests
      iii. Any comments/recommendations for library services? Also looking for a new representative for next year
      iv. Senator Blood: *The reason that the Experimental Forest was closed because of large congregations gathering out there. I would love to see it open, but we would have to find ways to enforce social distancing.*
      v. Senator Pham: *Perhaps posting a notice or having a police officer parked there to prevent large gatherings may aid. Could we suggest opening the Botanical Gardens?*
      vi. Senator Blood: *There are no student workers there, so there would be no maintenance, and lots of crowds at the Botanical Gardens.*
b. Diversity and Inclusion, Emmanuel Adjei

c. Health and Human Services, Rose Sommers

d. Graduate Campus Life, Emily Knight
   i. Grad Campus Life 4.23.20
   ii. PLEASE TAKE THIS SURVEY
   iii. Quick survey about stipends, COVID-19, and moonlighting
   iv. Need preliminary data from senate before we send to the entire graduate body
   v. Please respond by Saturday (4/25) at 8PM
   vi. Link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VVMS6Z5

e. Working with ITSAB and Heath to lockdown more tele-healthcare availability over the summer

f. It was brought to our attention that there are issues with infrastructure, so we are working with Redfern to try to improve the infrastructure as soon as possible to provide tele-health to everyone.

g. Parking and Facilities, Qianyi Gao

h. Graduate Academic Affairs, Robert O'Hara
   i. Waiting on info from President Samons regarding tuition email that went out this morning

   ii. Grading policy clarification for GToRs: students request to implement grade type change on their end goes to their advisor. Different from exempting from final (GToRs will still get emailed from students about exempting final)

   iii. Summer Classes: approval from SACS to allow international students to enroll in courses online; Dean Fleming has asked PIs that have international students working for them or departments that have the ability to extend assistantships over the summer

   iv. Task force is continuing their paused discussions about having summer look more like fall/spring semesters

   v. Advisory Committee passed a policy allowing graduate school to accept transfer credits that are pass/fail (during alternative grading periods). Sent to the Graduate Council for a vote (don’t know the final vote but President Samons and I both voted to pass it). Pending word from the Academic council, will post final policy language on discord.
1. The American Council on Education's six associations issued policy recommendations asking institutions to “recognize the extraordinary burden placed on students at this time.” I can share that document in discord

vi. Confirmed acceptance is down 29% overall, 16% at doctoral level (from this time last year - April 2019) raises concerns about assistantship coverage for next year (i.e. not having grad students to fill roles). Just an FYI for GSG.

vii. Senator Flanagan: *They are talking about not teaching labs or pushing them to the spring, so for us that would mean no teaching assistantships in the fall.*

viii. Senator O’Hara: *I will bring this forward and I believe this is in the back of everyone’s mind.*

G. Old Business

H. New Business

   a. GB2020-20- **A Bill to** Change the Positions of Senate Secretary and the Director of Communications and Social Media

      Pass: 43  Fail: 2  Abstain: 2

   b. GB2020-21- **A Bill to** Dissolve the Communications Committee

      Pass: 45  Fail: 3  Abstain: 1

   c. GR2020-22- **A Resolution to** Pass the 2020-2021 Budget

      Pass: 32 Fail: 6  Abstain: 5

      Senator Pham: Since the Deputy Director is on the same level as the VP and Pro-Temp, shouldn’t their pay be the same? If adding $200 to put this position to your tier, that may increase incentive.

      Senator Malik: I do not think that paying $200 more would change the behaviors of this position, but if it did, perhaps they are not the best fit.

      Senator Beadle: Move to amend the $1100 to $1300 for the pay of GSG Communications Director. *Senator Pham- Second*
President Samons: Reject the motion.

Vote for the amendment of Budget

Amend: 44  Do not amend: 2  Abstain: 2

Vote for amended bill

Pass: 24  Fail: 14  Abstain: 6

d. GR2020-23- **A Resolution to Power Up Bills and Legislation’s Impact, Strength, and Helpfulness (PUBLISH)**

   Pass: 32  Fail: 6  Abstain: 5

I. Other Announcements and Open Remarks

J. Good of the Senate

   a. VP Porter: Thanks to all committee chairs and senators for everything you have done! Please fill out 2 surveys listed in the Minutes and Discord. Please reach out to myself or President Samons if you are interested in serving.

11. Adjournment – 9:35 PM

12. Senate Secretary Katherine Allen: If you have events that you would like to share with the Graduate Student community, I WILL ADD THEM TO THE MEETING AGENDAS! Please email me at kallen5@g.clemson.edu with what you would like to include, and it will be placed in this section. During the meeting, you can give more details and answer any questions. Items received by Tuesday at 8 pm will be included in the agenda that will be distributed on Wednesday. Other items will be included in the meeting minutes.
Date Filed: 04/11/2020

Date Enacted:

Sponsor: Kaitlyn Samons

Co-Sponsors: John Porter III and Amir Malek

G.B. # 2020-20

A Bill to Change the Positions of Senate Secretary and the Director of Communications and Social Media

Whereas The Position of Senate Secretary and the Communications Director are both positions the Senate charges with the passing out of important information to the Senate and Graduate Student Population;

Whereas We believe the Position of Senate Secretary and the position of Communications Director are equally valuable, but a job a single person can accomplish;

Whereas The role of the Communications Committee is mandated in the GSG Bylaws as: “to handle all internal communications of the Graduate Student Senate, including the Graduate Student Government website, official emails, and social media accounts, and to aid the President and Vice-President with official Graduate Student Government external communications” in Article 6 (Section 8), and we feel that this role, coupled with the role of the Senate Secretary noted in Articles 3 and 4, is of similar job description,

Therefore, be it enacted by the Clemson University Graduate Student Senate assembled,

That the combined Bylaws and Rules of Order adapt the language of “The Senate Secretary” in Article III (Section 4.4 and 7) and Article IV (Sections 1 and 2) of the Bylaws to be “GSG Communications Director”; 

That the Bylaws adapt the language of “Director of Communications and Social Media” in Article V (Section 8) of the Bylaws to be “GSG Communications Director.”

That the directives of the Communications Committee found in Article VI (Section 8) be moved under the directives of the Director of Communications and Social Media, dissolving the committee but not erasing the goals and expectations for the Senate body.
Kaitlyn Samons, Student Body President

John Porter III, President of the Senate

Chris Miller, Vice President for Student Affairs
G.B. # 2020-21

A Bill to Dissolve the Communications Committee

Whereas the Communications Committee is tasked with handling “all internal communications of the Graduate Student Senate, including the Graduate Student Government website, official emails, and social media accounts, and to aid the President and Vice-President with official Graduate Student Government external communications” in Article 6 (Section 8) of the combined Bylaws document;

Whereas we believe this committee can be dissolved and the duties of such committee be separated and delegated to the GSG Webmaster, the GSG Communications Director, the President, the Vice President, the Chief of Staff, and the Pro Tempore;

Therefore, be it enacted by the Clemson University Graduate Student Senate assembled,

That the Bylaws dissolve the Communications Committee in Article 6 (Section 8) and adapt the language of the combined Bylaws document to note such delegation.

That the delegations of the Communications Committee in Article 6 (Section 8) be moved under the new position “GSG Communications Director” so as to not undermine the importance of the directives, nor lose the capabilities to perform such duties.

______________________________  __________________
Kaitlyn Samons, Student Body President  Date

______________________________  __________________
John Porter III, President of the Senate  Date

______________________________  __________________
Chris Miller, Vice President for Student Affairs  Date
A Resolution to Pass the 2020-2021 Budget

Whereas, the Senate budget must be tentatively approved by the last Senate meeting before Summer;

Whereas, the members writing this Budget are able to only guess at the expected budget for Senate next semester due to budget confirmation not coming until the July 2020 Board of Trustee meeting;

Whereas, the writers of this resolution strongly believe in the changes to budget based on duty delegations;

Whereas, previous legislations have been passed in the Senate chambers combining the duties of Pro-Tempore and Rules and Procedures Director, Chief of Staff and Graduate Campus Life Director, and Communications Director and Senate Secretary;

Whereas, these changes along with the requested need to add the duties of the GSG Treasurer back to the Bylaws;

Whereas, the Communications Committee was recently dissolved by the Senate body;

Whereas, this is a known draft of the budget that can be readdressed at the first Senate meeting in August of 2020.

Therefore, be it resolved by the Clemson University Graduate Student Senate assembled,

That the budget is tentatively approved by the Senate.

_________________________________________________    __________________________________________
Kaitlyn Samons, President of the Senate                      Date

_________________________________________________    __________________________________________
John Porter III, President of the Senate                      Date
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Date Filed: April 15, 2020

Date Enacted:

Sponsor: Kien Pham

Proposed Co-Sponsors: Sarah Beadle, John Porter III, Kaitlyn Samons

G.B. # 2020-23

A Resolution to Power Up Bill’s and Legislation’s Impact, Strength, and Helpfulness (PUBLISH)

Whereas writing legislation is a Graduate Student Government (GSG) member’s duty listed in the GSG Bylaws under Article III-Section 2.4.

Whereas there is a lack of variety in legislation’s sponsors this year and in past years;

Whereas members of the Rules and Procedures committee have been the authors of the majority, if not all, legislations in the current and the 2018-2019 academic years, and there will be a complete turnover of that committee in the next academic year;

Whereas the recent enacted legislations i.e. the CoS & PPT bill, the FORWARD bill, and the MOBILE resolution were written to raise the standard of Senators in the Executive board and the committee leadership, but there is yet a legislation piece that raise the standard of all Senators, especially those without leadership positions;

Whereas a legislation has shown to be an effective tool to raise awareness, keep accountability and force actions on issues that are important to the graduate student body;

Whereas GSG leaderships may have dialogue with the university for their entire term on consequential topics without utilizing uniting power of a legislation piece as a leverage in those dialogues;

Whereas Senators may fear retaliation when proposing a legislation piece that can be considered as controversial to the university but otherwise compliant to the Student Code of Conduct;

Therefore, be it resolved by the Clemson University Graduate Student Senate assembled,

That Senators in all capacity, with and without leadership positions in GSG, are encouraged to think of legislations as publications in academia. The sponsoring Senator is considered the first author, similar to an academic paper. Because the legislative process requires the same
collaborative effort as in research, there are often more than one co-sponsors on a legislation piece.

Like an academic publication, a bill or resolution requires a hypothesis i.e. the GSG cause, data collection e.g. student surveys and dialogues with the university, and peer-reviews i.e. the final vote on the Senate floor. One can also think of the presentation of the legislation on the floor prior to the final vote as a 3-minute thesis presentation or a conference presentation.

Like in academia, sometimes, an article does not pass peer-reviews on the first attempt at publication. At that time, an editing process, or an amendment process in legislative terms, begins to address the comments from the reviewers which may require additional study of the cause, additional data collection, and re-submission for peer-reviews.

Finally, like how a publication does not mean the end of research for the corresponding author, a legislation should only be the beginning or a part of the final solution for a GSG issue.

That Senators are expected to be fluent in the legislative process that is written instructively in the GSG Bylaws under Article V – Section 6. The section defines the difference between a bill and a resolution and lists out the steps needed to sponsor a legislation.

That while engaging in constructive dialogues with the university, Senators are encouraged to unite GSG in one voice through legislations and utilize that voice as a leverage in deriving reasonable and beneficial solutions with the university.

That starting in the academic year of 2020-2021, the Rules and Procedures Chair are expected to participate in external and internal committee meetings and to support the committees in sponsoring impactful legislation.

That even if a controversial legislation is enacted, as long as it is compliant to the Clemson Office of Community and Ethical Standards (OCES), GSG supports the full protection of the sponsoring Senator(s) and its sources from retaliation of any kind.

_________________________________________________  ____________________________
Kaitlyn Samons, Student Body President  Date

_________________________________________________  ____________________________
John Porter III, President of the Senate  Date

_________________________________________________  ____________________________
Chris Miller, Vice President for Student Affairs  Date