



January 14, 2020 | 7:00 p.m.
Nebraska Union | Ballroom

CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

President Ratcliff moved to approve the minutes from the December 2019 GSA meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

OPEN FORUM

Jake Johnson, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs presented on the current draft for the new Student Code of Conduct. The draft document was sent to GSA representatives for review on January 14th, 2020. Jake requested feedback from GSA representatives and their constituencies. He informed representatives that the Central Administration is gathering feedback until February 7th, 2020. Jake also offered to speak to the Assembly again on February 2nd, 2020 to answer questions, given the short notice with which the document was provided. He also mentioned feedback could be made available sending it to his email (johnson@unl.edu) or through the website that will be published in the Next at Nebraska and Nebraska Today newsletters in the upcoming days.

Rep. Harp raised a concern regarding the short noticed with which materials had been distributed to the Assembly. President Ratcliff apologized for the past couple of months, which had various unusual circumstances. Materials will be made available the week prior to the meeting.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

President Ratcliff

President Ratcliff gave an update regarding the University of Nebraska System Healthcare discussion. A firm was hired to review the situation at Nebraska and compare it to other Big 10 institutions. In general, all institutions are seeing rising premiums, however Nebraska is also seeing extreme rising out of pocket costs. Still, the consulting firm affirmed that the student insurance plan in Nebraska is competitive with peer institutions, and the Central Administration is concerned about making changes to keep attractive to insurance carriers. In the past, United Healthcare raised concerns on the low number of insured and the large number of high cost claims. The healthcare committee will bring changes to upper admin and final decisions will come in March.

Rep. Fruhling asked for the representation in the 26 people composing the committee evaluating healthcare. President Ratcliff responded that UNL makes 33% of system, and that there are 2 graduate students, 3 undergraduate students, 4 faculty members, and 2 administrators from UNL in the committee. Other institutions in the Nebraska System have a similar breakdown of representation.

VPSA Sotelo asked if information will be distributed to the student body before decisions are reached in March? President Ratcliff said that has been discussed in the committee, but has not been determined.

Executive Vice President Juritsch
Nothing to report.

Vice President of Student Affairs Sotelo

VPSA Sotelo informed the Assembly that she was selected as a member of the Student Committee for the Title IX Collaborative, otherwise known as the Student Committee on Sexual Misconduct, on Thursday January 24th at 4 pm. She explained that the letter discussed on the previous assembly was halted for this reason, and that she will evaluate the representation, effectiveness, and seriousness of the committee and report back to the Assembly.

She also mentioned she will be attending the Parking Committee meetings later in the month where the budget will be discussed, and asked representatives to email her if there were any concerns regarding parking, buses, permit costs, etc.

She informed the Assembly that she will also attend the Executive Vice Chancellor Student Advisory Board meeting on Tuesday, February 11th, and asked representatives to email her if they wanted her to bring up any topics or issues. She mentioned she will be advocating to add graduate student seats to this Advisory Board.

Rep. Godfrey asked for details regarding the timeframe and information that were available to participate in the Student Committee on Sexual Misconduct, and how could people participate. VPSA Sotelo responded that the application form was opened and closed during the last two weeks the University was open before Winter Break, and that, during their meeting in late November, Dr. Bellows expressed that she expected students to know how to find the information. However, in that same meeting, Dr. Bellows and Dr. Swearer expressed their openness to allow any student to join the committee at any given time.

Rep. Vorobeveva requested links to the websites with relevant information regarding the topics discussed, and VPSA Sotelo committed to providing those links.

Vice President of Representation Rodene

VPR Rodene asked if representatives were required to be on campus during the week of January 6th 2020. About 2/3 of the representatives raised their hands to indicate they were present during that time frame.

Rep. Vorobeveva responded that the answer to this question depended on whether students are research or teaching assistants.

Rep. Moeun asked if graduate students at UNL had specific assigned breaks every work year. She mentioned knowing of students that were poorly treated by their advisors when they requested time off during the break.

VPR Rodene replied that while that was an unfortunate situation, the aim of his question was to determine whether the Assembly Meeting could have been held the week before the semester started.

Rep. Godfrey mentioned that contracts in their department require graduate students to arrive to campus the Friday before the semester begins.

Rep. Rukundu stated that it is University policy to be on campus whenever the University is open.

Rep. Warrington stated that their department required graduate students to arrive to campus on the Monday prior to the beginning of the semester at 10 am, regardless of whether they have an assistantship. Furthermore, people without assistantships were still required to do the same amount of work as people getting paid.

VPSA Sotelo stated that it sounded like policy and practice varies per department, and sometimes on a case by case basis, thus, it is probably safer to keep the first January Assembly meeting on the first Tuesday of the spring semester.

VPR Rodene informed the Assembly that he will be attending the Committee for Fee Allocations meeting and asked if any representatives would like to come to the meeting and raise any issues, especially given the multiple complaints regarding health insurance, CAPS services, and problems with the care provided in the University Health Center. A few representatives raised their hand.

Vice President of Finance Huben (2 minutes)

VPF Huben encouraged the Assembly to continue utilizing the Assembly's funds for the benefit of graduate students through the passing of bills.

He also informed representatives that he will be attending the Commencement Ceremony Committee and requested feedback from the Assembly by February 5th.

SE Chair Hackett asked what is the status on the commencement gowns conversation. VPF Huben responded that the University is in a 10-year contract with the gowns provider, and they will not change the gowns. He added that the Assembly still has not decided whether to use the additional funds for purchasing and renting gowns.

Rep. Lim asked why are graduation fees needed given that we pay a high tuition. VPF Huben agreed with the spirit of Rep. Lim's question, and offered that the justification is likely marginal costs for the space, chair rental, staffing, etc. He committed to ask this question during the committee meeting.

Rep. Godfrey mentioned commencement fees are also sometimes used to dissuade people from applying for graduation unnecessarily.

SE Chair Hackett mentioned a solution would be to make it a one-time fee for students.

Rep. Schultz reasoned that if the fee was charged multiple times in order to dissuade people from irresponsibly applying to graduate, then only the people who apply for the 2nd, 3rd, etc. times should be paying this fee.

VPF Huben thanked Rep. Schultz for the comment, and mentioned he will bring forward her argument.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Professional Development

PV Chair Richards mentioned they are working with Graduate Students on a series of events described in the bill discussed at this meeting. Also, he reminded the Assembly that the Career Fair is coming up and that there will be a breakfast mingle for graduate students to network with employers.

Rep. Fruhling asked how are the employers attending the career fair decided? PD Chair Atieno responded that Career Services has a list of recruiters who sign up to attend the career fair. She also mentioned that students can find out more about recruiters with the new app careerfair+.

VPSA Sotelo asked if there were comments regarding the career fair being to undergraduate oriented. PD Chair Atieno responded that the breakfast mingle is planned with recruiters that are specifically looking to hire graduate students, and that career services is working to address this issue. She added that in the careerfair+ app one can filter based on major, career level, etc.

Social Events

SE Chair Hackett informed the assembly that the first welcome back event will take place next Friday, and that there will be prizes, games, and food at the event. They mentioned a bowling social is coming up and asked for more ideas for socials.

VPSA Sotelo suggested rock climbing at the Outdoor Sports and Adventure Center, and mentioned they hold events for inexperienced groups.

Diversity and Inclusion

Nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes – November

President Ratcliff moved to approve the minutes from November 2019. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

GSA Bill #10: A bill authorizing the allocation of GSA Professional Development funds for the procurement of lunches for students attending departmental GSA events relating to the viewing of professional development focused webinars.

PD Chair Richards introduced the bill and explained it sought to allow groups of 4 or more graduate students to apply for purchasing snacks or meals if registered and attending a webinar provided by graduate studies. Groups need to be able to reserve a room on campus where food could be delivered, and confirmation of webinar registration would be required. The funds would be allocated on a first come first serve basis.

President Ratcliff asked if there would be a limited range in the size of the groups applying for these funds. PD Chair Richards replied that the purpose is solely to increase webinar participations and the committee is not concerned if big groups apply for funds at this point. Diversifying the attendance is not a priority in this pilot, but could be considered if the program gets formalized as a fund. He added that these could be useful activities for departmental GSAs to get established.

Rep. Tankersley asked how many webinars are left. PD Chair Richards responded that there are about 4 webinars left, and the specific dates are available in the graduate studies website.

PD Chair Atieno reiterated that the main purpose of this bill is to pilot a program to help with attendance to professional development webinars offered by graduate studies, and added that other seminars could be offered via zoom if there is interest.

Rep. Tankersley asked if webinars are recorded. PD Chair Atieno answered that they are not, and that graduate studies justification is that they change the content over time.

PD Chair Atieno amended lines 6 and 16 of the bill for clarity and specificity. The bill passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED