



September 3, 2019 | 7:00 p.m.  
Nebraska Union | Ballroom

## CALL TO ORDER

## APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

President Ratcliff moved to postpone approval of the April, 2019 meeting minutes until the October, 2019 meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

## OPEN FORUM

President Ratcliff explained that open forum is an opportunity to share insight, information about organizations, events, amongst others.

VP Sotelo shared information regarding an art exhibit to be hosted by DearUNL on Friday 9/6, a group advocating for the end of sexual violence on campus.

Representative Leighty shared information on a group meeting hosted by Sustain UNL on September 20<sup>th</sup> at the Nebraska Union.

Representative Smith suggested for the Assembly to host an online forum where these events and their information could be announced and stored.

## EXECUTIVE REPORTS

President Ratcliff.

President Ratcliff explained that graduate students received a year extension on the current health care plan. He suggested the assembly to explore the aspects of the current healthcare plan which are working and not working for graduate students. He reminded the assembly that the University administration promised that graduate students will be included in future healthcare negotiations. He also referred to the increased burden of graduation expenses. President Ratcliff reminded the assembly that the stipend conversation with administration is still ongoing, although former Executive Vice Chancellor Plowman left the University.

Vice President of Student Affairs Sotelo

VP SA Sotelo informed the assembly that Chancellor Green announced at the Faculty Senate meeting the formation of a Title IX Collaborative Workgroup. She also informed the assembly that the first meeting of the Executive Vice Chancellor's Student Advisory Board would be this September 24<sup>th</sup>.

Vice President of Representation Rodene

VPR Rodene reminded the assembly that placards are used for attendance, and to please pick up their placards as they come in and leave them at the table. He informed the assembly that some departments are still without a representative. He also requested that members of the assembly who are not receiving meeting packets informed him at the end of the meeting.

Vice President of Finance Huben

VPF Huben presented the assembly with the current status of GSA finances. He explained our budget is first approved through ASUN, then assigned through our bills. This year's budget is \$33,000 as divided in categories such as conference travel grants, department and special projects, professional development, networking and special events, executive conference travel, diversity and inclusion, amongst others. He informed the assembly we do not make use of our entire budget and requested ideas for utilizing our budget. Representative Gutierrez Pinto asked what happens to the budget leftover from the previous year. They were informed that the leftover budget is placed on GSA reserve budget which can be accessed for large projects with ASUN approval. They asked whether the money can be spent in departmental events and were informed that there is no current framework for such use of the budget, but the special project grants program can be an avenue for funding for departmental events.

## OLD BUSINESS

Social Events Chair Election.

President Ratcliff informed the assembly that the social events chair is open. He described the position responsibilities including planning graduate student appreciation week and ensuring there are refreshments at the assembly meetings.

Representative Hauver and Representative Hackett self-nominated for the position. They decided to run for the position as co-chairs and were elected unanimously.

Professional Development Chair Atieno moved to elect a co-chair for the Professional Development Committee. She nominated representative Richards for the position. They were elected unanimously.

## NEW BUSINESS

Health Insurance Discussion.

President Ratcliff opened the floor to a health insurance discussion.

VPSA Sotelo mentioned students in her department are anxious regarding potential elevated copays in the upcoming years. She also mentioned students have been turned away at the UNL Health Center because of preexisting conditions.

Representative Gutierrez Pinto mentioned there are psychological services that graduate students cannot access.

Representative Rukundo mentioned there are people that pay for insurance without ever getting the benefits and asked why should they be forced to pay for the student insurance. President Ratcliff asked if those people have alternative insurance. Rep. Rukundo said they do, but they are international students. It was proposed that information regarding the dynamics of student insurance for international students are more thoroughly disseminated.

Representative Hackett questioned our health insurance package and benefits as compared to other Big10 institutions. He pointed out that we have the largest out of pocket costs and considerably less benefits and questions why can't we get better less expensive healthcare. Mentioned this can be detrimental for the University if we want to recruit talented graduate students.

Representative Erceg mentioned that the increasing copay also affects medications in terms of cost and time. She mentioned that there are students forced to buy medications individually which has dramatically increased their cost.

Representative Schultz echoed Rep. Erceg in that their medications have tripled in cost.

Representative Palacios mentioned that dental and eye care benefits are poor. Only \$1000 of dental coverage is barely enough for basic care and graduate students are not covered beyond that. Rep. Khanal mentioned the out of pocket cost for a root canal and other basic procedures is approximately 50%.

Representative Leighty added that the system for reviewing medical and dental policies is unclear and the website is difficult to navigate.

President Ratcliff asked the assembly if posed with the options of an increase in out of pocket costs or an increase in premiums, which would the assembly select.

Representative Leighty mentioned to the assembly that the out of pocket costs in the event of a hospital stay can sky rocket.

Representative Erceg mentioned that the 70% of departmental support in premiums is set at the state level.

VPSA Sotelo mentioned that the University should negotiate a better deal, however, if this is the decision students need to make representatives should have the opportunity of gathering their constituents' opinion and bring it back to the assembly.

Representative Leighy suggested the assembly works on an online form to collect personal stories, opinion, and suggestions from graduate students to bring back to the University administration.

The health insurance discussion ended.

GSA Committees Discussion.

President Ratcliff informed the assembly representatives that they will be assigned to committees. Representatives can select their committees of preference, and their selection will be considered during their assignment. P. Ratcliff requested Committee Chairs to introduce their committee's to the assembly to facilitate representatives' selections.

Academic Affairs Co-chairs were not present. President Ratcliff informed the assembly this committee addresses everything related to student life, and often collaborates with professional development to bring opportunities to graduate students.

Diversity and Inclusion Chair Peter mentioned this committee addresses the diverse student population needs. She mentioned the committee will represent graduate students in the Council of Student Excellence and Diversity and will address issues of diversity on campus, campus climate, collaborations, amongst others.

GTAP Chair Tobin described the graduate travel awards program and mentioned the need for finding and reviewing travel grant applications.

Professional Development Chair Atieno mentioned this committee works with the office of graduate studies and career development to fill gaps in workshops in relation to networking and career development. This committee also manages the SPGP. Chair Atieno encouraged students to apply to this program for any event they may have in mind.

Quality of Life Chair Entzminger mentioned this committee will focus on scheduling events around mental health awareness. Ideas for this year include a self-care series. Other issues the committee wished to revisit are parking, campus lightning at night, and graduation costs.

President Ratcliff noted that the Social Events committee was previously introduced during elections.

#### GSA Bill #1 A Bill Proposing Changes to the GSA By-Laws

President Ratcliff introduced the bill. He said the changes were discussed over the previous year, and mainly addressed bill submission procedures, election procedures, and inclusive language. There were no questions or debate and the bill was approved unanimously.

#### GSA Bill #2 A Bill to Support New University Statements on Academic Freedom.

President Ratcliff introduced the bill. He reminded the assembly that following the events of the Fall 2017, the AAUP placed UNL in their censure list. The University Guidelines this bill refers to are part of a University effort to protect academic freedom. There were no questions or debate and the bill passed unanimously.

#### GSA Bill #3 A Bill to Co-Sponsor a First-Gen Graduate Student Event put on by First Generation Nebraska Advisory Board.

President Ratcliff introduced the bill. He said the First Generation Nebraska Advisory Board is planning the event described in the bill, and is looking for support from GSA to disseminate the

event. Representative Leighty asked if only First-Gen students were invited and who qualifies as such. President Ratcliff answered that everyone is invited, but the event is to celebrate First-Gen students, and that the definition is inclusive of graduate and undergraduate students. VPSA Sotelo made two friendly amendments to remove a space in line 2 and lines 8 – 10. Representative Leighty made a friendly amendment to remove the word ‘further’ from line 11. The bill passed unanimously.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

GTAP Chair Tobin reminded the assembly to register as reviewers and disseminate the information.

VPSA Sotelo reminded the assembly of the art walk event to happen on Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>.

VPR Rodene reminded the assembly to review their email and ensure the assembly executive board has their information.

Professional Development Chair Atieno reminded the assembly to look for information on the workshops offered by Graduate Studies.

The meeting was adjourned.