

GSA NOVEMBER ASSEMBLY MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm on November 6, 2018 in the Centennial Room of the Nebraska Union.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

All voted in favor of approving the minutes.

OPEN FORUM

Diversity and Inclusion Chair Sotelo made a motion to include in agenda for election of co-chair for diversity and inclusion. The rationale was that it would be beneficial to have another perspective on leadership of committee and to share tasks. No one opposed editing the agenda.

American Association of University Professors UNL Chapter President Regina Werum presented information about UNL’s chapter of the AAUP. She said that anyone who teaches in higher education is eligible for participation in this association (including TAs). The AAUP’s main task is to serve as your go-to forum if you have questions about academic freedom and freedom of speech as instructors. It also serves as a quasi-union (collective union) at many institutions. UNO is unionized and uses AUP as its collective bargaining mechanism; UNL is NOT unionized but there is an AAUP chapter, which is an advocacy chapter. The AAUP will represent any individual who has concerns about their academic freedom or freedom of speech encroachments. When you go to ASUP the website, you’ll see a few things of interest: 1) The Red Book (policy documents and reports) – students rights and responsibilities are outlined in this document. Membership is inexpensive and not based on status – it’s on a sliding scale based on income ($60/yr for anyone who makes less than $30,000). Regardless of whether you’re a member or not, the AAUP will STILL advocate for you. Diversity and Inclusion Chair Sotelo asked: You said that the AAUP represents everyone who teaches – how does that translate to mentorship in lab (e.g.,RA looking over undergrads)? Werum answered that if you have teaching responsibilities (instructed to interact with students in a classroom or classroom-like setting), it counts. Werum then discussed the difference between academic freedom and freedom of speech. She said that freedom of speech is grounded in US constitution, which has two important implications: 1) it is constitutional law and 2) applies to everyone in this country, at least definitely to American citizens. Since freedom of speech is grounded in the US constitution, it has particular relevance for public institutions, like the university. The private sector is regulated by statutory laws; the public sector is primarily regulated by the US constitution. Depending on where you take a job, there are different institutional guidelines for what constitutes as freedom of speech, regardless of whether you teach or not. On the other hand, academic freedom isn’t grounded in the US constitution or statutory law, but in common law, which means that what is considered freedom of speech isn’t based in an act of Congress and not in the constitution, but rather in legal precedent. Therefore, when you’re discussing academic freedom, what’s important to remember is that the legal precedents that are used to interpret what academic freedom means have become normative rather than regulating by law.

Representative Kinney announced on behalf of the History Department that announce the annual conference in the humanities on Mar 1-2 2019; the call for papers is out and the submission deadline is Jan 7 (open to anyone in the humanities to submit, both grad and undergrad). UNL history graduate association invites undergrads and grads to participate in the 15th annual James A. Rawley conference in the humanities – welcomes submissions in humanities-related fields. The theme is “conflict and resistance.” Dr. Guadalupe San Miguel Huston and Professor Sara Deere are speakers.

ELECTIONS

Representative Sotelo nominated Agricultural Economics Representative Suchato. The nomination was seconded by Representative Schultz. Representative Suchato was unanimously elected Co-Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

VP Martin reported on AFIRE.

VP Stehle reported on communication issues. She said that she would send the reports of absences and presences that she has now for the past three meetings. If something looks off (incorrect absence/presence), talk to her to ensure you’re on the listserv properly. After the December meeting, she’ll start following the typical absence policy (3 absences – 1 unexcused, 2 excused) or department will be excluded from GTAP funding.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Academic Affairs Chair Juritsch reported that the committee aims to address any inequality in academic life. He said that a meeting with the committee will happen this month (expect an email committee members). He is looking for a co-chair if anyone is interested in getting more involved and is working closely on the Stipend survey.

Quality of Life Co-Chairs Sandhu and Rodene reported that they had a bill at the October meeting for donations to Hurricane Florence; that October 25 was the first coffee hour event with diversity and inclusion committee; that they were putting forward a bill tonight asking for future funding of coffee events; and that a quality of life survey is still in the works and planned and will have future movement with committee members.

Social Events Chair Perez reported that the committee had two events for this semester, the welcome back social event in August and a career-planning event for graduate students. He reported on one coming up this December, a relaxation event for graduate students.

NEW BUSINESS

GSA Bill #5 A bill allocating funds for a winter social and networking event

Social Chair Perez presented the bill. There were no questions and no discussion or debate. The bill passed.

GSA Bill #6 A bill to form a committee to draft a letter to professors

The bill was presented by Academic Affairs Committee Chair Juritsch and Representative Mollet. There were several questions. The Representative Jafarzadeh asked where the purpose of the bill was to collection information. The Representative Jimenez mentioned that the department has an Ombudsperson position, which is an emeritus position that is focused on being the go-to point of contact for graduate students if there are professional, academic, and personal concerns. He suggested that this could be a suggested position for other departments/programs to combat the concerns addressed in the letter and beyond. Representative Mellinger asked if graduate students would be able to choose the size of the committee. The line associated with that question was supposed to be taken out of the final draft of the bill. The assembly then transitioned into discussion. Representative Jafarzadeh presented an amendment to line 21 to remove the words “6 person volunteer.” The amendment passed by a majority. Representative Stine presented an amendment to change Line 9 from “behond” to “beyond.” The amendment passed by a majority. The assembly then voted on the bill, and it passed.

GSA Bill #7 A bill authorizing a letter to upper administration on graduate student stipends

The bill was presented by EVP Ratcliff. There were several questions. Representative Jimenez asked about the process of crafting the letter. Representative Entzminger asked about the nature of the vote. Representative Suboda said that he had not received notice of the letter in any form (original nor current draft). It emerged that there were similar issues across departments, and the majority of the assembly did not receive the original copy of the letter. EVP Ratcliff tabled the bill until the December meeting.

GSA Bill #8 A bill authorizing use of funds for GSA coffee hour events

Quality of Life Co-Chair Rodene presented the bill. INP asked about attendance at the last meeting and the likelihood of non-GSA representatives attending before GSA meetings. During discussion, Professional Development Chair Atieno offered an amendment to change to “allocate up to $100 per event.” This amendment was passed by the majority. Quality of Life Co-Chair Rodene offered an amendment to change a comma to a period. The amendment passed. The assembly voted on the bill, and it passed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Representative Jimenez announced that they had finalized the search for the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion. They are currently choosing between two candidates who will start in January.

GTAP Chair Dahdolan announced that he had reached out to members to assign meeting for GTAP Committee, and asked them to meet after the meeting.

Professional Development Chair Atieno made a similar announcement about the Professional Development Committee.

Representative Erag said she did not know which committee she was on.

The meeting was adjourned.