

# Graduate Student Senate



**GSS Meeting | 3/30/2020 | 12-1:45 PM | Zoom**

**1. Bring the Meeting to Session – POGSS**

- a. Meeting called to session at 12:05 pm
- b. General housekeeping for the meeting:
  - i. Everyone should keep microphone muted, unless speaking.
  - ii. Use “raise hand” in Zoom if you would like to speak. Casey will call on you.
  - iii. Voting will be done by voice first and using “raise hand” if needed.

**2. Roll Call – COGSS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Casey O'Heran	President	Present
Liz Weidner	Vice President	Absent, Sarah serving as proxy
Alex Padilla	Financial Affairs	Present
Jacob Koile	Community Coordinator	Absent, Sarah serving as proxy
Jacob Bennett	External Relations	Present
Sarah Widlansky	Communications	Present
Dominic Payne	CEPS	Present
Kerry Dykens	CEPS	Present
Francesco Preti	CEPS	Absent, Karen serving as proxy
Sanchari Kundu	CHHS	Absent
Emily Whalen	CHHS	Present
Sumeyra Gok	COLA	Present
Martine Grenier-Burtis	COLA	Absent
Allison Giannotti	COLA	Present
Ben Remillard	COLA	Present
Lauren Breza	COLSA	Present
Yoka Milosavljevic Ardeljan	PAUL	Present
Karen Moran Rivera	International	Present
Marie-Josiane (MJ) Ohoueu	Grad School	Present
Michael Fazi	Law	Present
Surya Kranthi Siyadri	Manchester	Absent, Sarah serving as proxy
Karla Oñate Melecio	Housing	Present

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### 3. Approval of the 3/9/20 Meeting Minutes - *POGSS & COGSS*

- a. Alex made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, seconded by Dominic.
- b. Minutes approved unanimously.

### 4. Speaker - *Dovev Levine-Leung (Assistant Dean of Graduate School)*

- a. Wanted to give updates on what the grad school is doing in response to COVID-19. He is pleased to see how the UNH community has pulled together during this time.
- b. Updates:
  - i. Keeping an FAQ page geared towards grad student issues. Need student input for this. Email Dovev with suggestions.
  - ii. Interested in how to be an advocate and resource for students. One idea was weekly Dispatch from the Dean that would come out next week. This will highlight best practices and ways that student groups and departments have been handling this situation.
  - iii. Regarding President Dean's message regarding commencement: there will be no in person commencement this spring. This is on hold for later.
  - iv. Not holding the GRC or 3MT competition in person. They will be virtual instead. The GRC will use virtual posters on a special site with an optional recorded presentation (~2min) to go with the posters. 3MT will solicit recorded presentations. Dean Moorhead may do a live webinar with recorded student talks while she hosts. Judging will happen in real time. Jovana will be sending an announcement today to all grad students about the GRC. Dovev recognized and thanked Jovana for the work she has been doing on this.
  - v. Grad School is trying to stay aware of what other universities and other groups at UNH are doing currently. Many groups doing virtual happy hours. May be difficult to implement at the grad school level, but could happen at the college level or by topic, etc. Dovev is open to suggestions.
  - vi. Has been getting a lot of questions about how UNH will handle the fees we've already paid. Provost is working with the Senate to prorate fees, or some other approach.
  - vii. Questions from the group: Casey added that he is working with Provost Jones on fees and they are meeting later this week. Casey asked about the Associate Dean search. This is wrapping up soon and Dovev will update at the next meeting. Jacob B. wants to gather information about how students are handling/responding to COVID and their experience in an entirely online environment (recognizing the unusual nature of this

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“experiment”) wants to know how GSS can contribute to this. Dovev agrees this is important but doesn’t have any specific ideas yet. Jacob will put some questions together.

## 5. Committee Updates – **Committee Chairs**

- a. None

## 6. Old Business

- a. Housing

- i. On-campus evacuations

1. Karla compiled a series of questions and answers that have been distributed to constituents and on social media.

- ii. Main Street – **POGSS**

1. President Dean has said that he is 60 – 70% confident it will still happen, but it is still unclear what the current hold up is. Not sure whether the Board of Trustees is still meeting this semester to vote on anything to help it move forward.
    2. Not confident this will make progress this semester.
    3. Leadership will continue to meet with the president and provost to get updates

- b. Gender question on teaching evaluations – **POGSS**

- i. This hasn’t been voted on and probably won’t this semester given the current situation. Casey is pleased with how we’ve advocated for this issue and encourages next year’s senate to continue this discussion with the Faculty Senate.
    - ii. Lauren said there has been some more back and forth on this issue in the SAC/Faculty Senate, but a majority are starting to say they should just pass it, rather than trying to add more issues onto this one.
    - iii. Lu Ferrell brought forward input from the trans community at UNH to their previous meeting.
    - iv. Strong push to eliminate question entirely from Faculty Senate and from trans community. They do not see reason for having the question.
    - v. SAC asked if we want to continue supporting our original statement or if we are open to eliminating the gender question altogether.
    - vi. Karla asked to clarify whether we had a statement about taking it out completely. The version of our resolution that we passed did not have that statement.

- c. Elections – **VPGSS**

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- i. This election had better turnout, particularly from Concord and Manchester.
- ii. Still waiting on one response and the new senators will be announced at the next meeting.

## 7. New Business

### a. Resolution: Spring 2020 pass/fail option for graduate students – **VPGSS**

- i. Faculty Senate wants to make an option for undergrad classes to be pass/fail where students could opt-in to the pass/fail option. Faculty would continue to grade on letter system.
- ii. GSS would need to decide what we want to be a passing grade for a grad student pass/fail option. Currently a B- is passing for grad classes.
- iii. Jovana thinks we should have pass/fail be the default. Studies show that students are less likely to take advantage of a service if it would be perceived as them needing extra help. Jovana thinks students should have to opt-in to getting a letter grade. Many schools are already doing this (e.g., Harvard Law, Stanford Law School). Strongly recommends pass/fail as default. Michael added that the Law School will be acting independently from the main campus decisions, due to its' more competitive nature. There are currently petitions going around both ways. Mentioned that a lot of grad students have families and having an option for letter grades creates a socioeconomic barrier. Thinks that mandatory pass/fail would be best, with no opt-in option for letter grades. This would just freeze your GPA wherever you were last semester to make it fair. Dominic agrees with Michael. Karla mentioned that the grad school requires a minimum grade for graduation. Some students could be counting on this semester to make that grade. Faculty senate discussed this for undergrads. They asked for an exception. We could do this too at the grad school level. MJ wondering if B- was cut for all departments why would this be a problem. Karla clarified that it wouldn't matter for passing individual classes but would matter for the overall graduation requirement of a B. Michael said that the law school requires a C- in all core courses. The American Bar Association has allowed schools to lower the number of courses you need to graduate.
- iv. We should decide what we want to call a passing grade (at or above B-?). Sarah added that when grad students take an undergrad class as pass/fail, a C is passing.

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- v. Dominic asked whether we should try to build into the resolution a request for a more permanent solution if this came up again. Casey said it may be better to write a new resolution for that later, urging the school to make a contingency plan. This resolution would just be for this semester, but we could say “we want the motions put forth to be the standard”.
  - vi. Jovana requests a friendly amendment to make pass/fail the default option, with an option to opt-in to letter grades following new standards (the cut-off for passing grades to be a C-). This was seconded by Dominic. This motion would set our own standard that is separate from the Faculty Senate.
  - vii. Michael asked what the faculty Senate is doing about undergrad classes. They are having letter grades as the default, with an option to opt-in to pass/fail by April 28<sup>th</sup> instead. Michael is concerned that people will still opt for letter grades if they see that other people are taking grades.
  - viii. Just voting to amend resolution as it stands. This will give time to see how it goes with the Faculty Senate and to discuss it with the Grad School administration before voting on the resolution during our next meeting.
  - ix. Voting on the amendment: Passed with one opposed vote.
  - x. May need to call a special meeting next week to act quickly, otherwise we will vote during our regular meeting in 2 weeks.
- b. Resolution: Spring 2020 course evaluations/online teaching – **POGSS**
- i. Faculty Senate resolution currently gives faculty the option to opt-in to having teaching evaluations.
  - ii. Casey’s understands the premise but thinks it’s important to collect some information on what worked and didn’t work during this time. Doesn’t want to be in a position where people aren’t ready if it happens again.
  - iii. Faculty Senate has a template for what the new evaluations would look like. We could request modifications to this if we want.
  - iv. Most faculty aren’t required to do any online training as part of the hiring process. Part of our resolution is to make this training mandatory for all instructors (i.e., faculty, lecturers, TAs).
  - v. Asked whether we would like to completely support faculty senate motion to take out evals or have our own opinion.
  - vi. Dominic agrees with mandatory online training. Casey asked whether we should have continuing education and require an update on training every few years. Karla mentioned that faculty are unionized, so this

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would make mandatory training unrealistic unless it was supported by the union. MJ wanted to point out how the online platform is changing when people are being trained. Dominic pointed out that it's probably going to change even more now with COVID-19.

- vii. Karla agrees that we should have the survey template that the Faculty Senate created, but that the questions could potentially change. She thinks this feedback should be mandatory though. Casey mentioned concern from faculty that these evaluations would be used to evaluate promotion to tenure. Karla thinks they are important to be used to evaluate response to COVID-19 but should not be considered when evaluating someone for tenure. Allison mentioned that some departments (e.g., English) have already announced that evaluations are suspended, unless someone opts-in to them. Since the Faculty Senate passed the resolution last week, this policy could have already been implemented. Our position would then just ensure that surveys are sent out to students.
  - viii. Dominic made a motion to move forward with the resolution as it is, Jacob B. seconded the motion.
  - ix. Voting on resolution: Passed with one abstention.
  - x. Casey will share the resolution with the Faculty Senate and administration.
- c. **Housing Letter - *POGSS/Housing & Transportation Committee***
- i. Babcock Hall being renovated in 2021.
  - ii. Housing Letter will reinforce our opinion that we feel something needs to happen now.
  - iii. Jacob B. summarized letter (lays out current housing situation, why housing is important to us, lack of clarity and timeline, urging short term contingency plan and 5-year comprehensive plan for sufficient affordable campus housing).
  - iv. Dominic wants to change some minor wording. Also noted that seeing no on-campus housing could discourage potential students from coming to UNH and thinks we should emphasize this since grad students contribute to the reputation of university (e.g., R1 status) more than undergrads.
  - v. Tabling this and voting on it during the next meeting with the amendments.
- d. **Budget – *FAO***

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- i. Casey gave a brief update and Alex will give more comprehensive update next time.
    - ii. No first Thursday for the rest of semester, though we may try to arrange a virtual one. Need to re-evaluate how we want to use the budget. Currently the budget is ~\$2000
    - iii. Some potential options are re-stocking the swag for next year and/or donating some to the Grad School student emergency fund.
  - e. Any other new business
    - i. none
- 8. Upcoming Events/Important Dates - POGSS**
  - a. April 9th: Jacob Bennett dissertation defense 1-3 PM via Zoom
    - i. Sarah will distribute Zoom link
  - b. April 13th: Next GSS meeting
    - i. Kevin Charles joining, we can discuss immunization letter with him.
- 9. Open Forum – POGSS**
  - a. none
- 10. Adjournment**
  - a. Karla made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dominic. Meeting adjourned at 1:46pm