

Graduate Student Senate



GSS Meeting | 04/28/2021 | 12:00 – 1:30 PM | Zoom

1. Bring the Meeting to Session – POGSS

- a. Meeting called to session at 12:02 pm

2. Roll Call – COGSS

3. Name	Role	Attendance
Dominic Payne	President	Present
Karla Oñate Melecio	Vice President	Present
Michael Fazi	External Affairs	Present
Sarah Widlansky	Communications	Present
Nishitha Kamini	Community Coordinator	Absent, Dom serving as proxy
Sumeyra Gok	COLA	Present
Kendra Bostick	COLA	Present
Allison Giannotti	CEPS	Absent, Sumeyra serving as proxy
Hamad Zaheer	CEPS	Present
Emily Whalen	COLSA	Present
Alix Flinders	CHHS	Absent, Inactive
Natasha Leuchanka Diessner	PAUL	Present
Cassie Manning	LAW	Present
Griffin Kmon	LAW	Present
Danielle Johnson	MANCHESTER	Absent, Sumeyra serving as proxy
Caroline Kanaskie	GRAD	Present
Sreelekha Dandu	Financial Affairs	Absent
Sanchari Kundu	HOUSING	Absent, Inactive
Akhtar Ardakani	PAUL	Present
Elizabeth Mamros	CEPS	Absent, Caroline serving as proxy
Chika Ugwuodo	ONLINE	Present
Chelsea Cabral	COLA	Present
Janie Bright	CHHS	Present
Chandra Annasamy	INTERNATIONAL	Present
Kamala Nasirova	CHHS	Absent, Sarah serving as proxy

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes – POGSS & COGSS

- a. Cassie made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 4/14/21, seconded by Chandra. The minutes were approved unanimously.

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5. Committee Updates – *Committee Chairs*

- a. None

6. Old Business – *POGSS*

- a. Merchandise Updates
 - i. Did not discuss.
- b. MUB Board of Governors
 - i. Did not discuss.
- c. Exit Survey Reminder
 - i. About 9-10 responses so far.

7. New Business – *POGSS*

- a. Indigenous NH Collaborative Collective (INHCC)
 - i. Dylan Kelly (Guest). PhD student in NRESS and a GA for the Grad School. INHCC member. Grassroots organization of indigenous and non-indigenous community members and UNH students, faculty, and staff. Focused on outreach and shedding light on indigenous people in NH today.
 - ii. Dylan shared a letter detailing the organization's goals before the meeting.
 - iii. INHCC Website: <https://indigenousoh.com/>
 - iv. There is a working group to establish names for trails on campus in traditional Algonquin (Abenaki language), in collaboration with an indigenous person. Focused on the College Brook Ravine area. The trails are currently unnamed, so they will not be re-naming anything.
 - v. UNH Facilities is on board with their plan.
 - vi. A map will be installed with trail names, a land recognition statement, and a QR code with link to recordings of the name pronunciation.
 - vii. They have permission from the university but are looking to engage the broader community to garner more community support. This can be in the form of a signature on their letter.
 - viii. Natasha really supports this and encourages GSS to support it as an organization. There was general support from GSS to have a vote on this today.
 - ix. Caroline made a motion to sign the INHCC letter supporting the naming of trails on campus, seconded by Cassie. This was approved unanimously and GSS officially endorses the letter.
- b. Discussion of Issues for next GSS Session

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- i. Dom shared a few slides about current and future graduate student issues.
 1. Advocacy and Outreach:
 - a. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 - b. International student support
 - i. Natasha said that having a classmate/friend who is also international can be helpful for transitions. Students may feel more comfortable with peer mentor rather than an administrator. Wondered whether this could be through OISS?
 - ii. Caroline mentioned that Dovev has been talking about similar things. GSS could reach out to him about partnering or doing things on our own.
 - iii. Akhtar added that OISS has an extra orientation for international students during orientation week. Grouped with a “leader” international grad student who walks them through many things. But based on her experience, people are overwhelmed during that week and might not remember much of the information. GSS could have a meeting with new international grad students after a couple months to check in.
 - iv. Karla wonders if we could work more closely with OISS. Dovev does a peer mentorship program for underrepresented students. A similar process could be run through OISS since they have a list of international students.
 - v. Dom added that it sounds like what we’re missing is a personal connection for international students.
 - vi. Sumeyra added that OISS may not have information for international students with non-student visas. Sumeyra unofficially mentored international students through her department and some others. She says OISS is already doing a good job during orientation with things like opening a bank account, but she thinks what students really

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- need is mentorship within specific departments or colleges. Dom agrees.
- vii. Chandra agrees with Sumeyra. She joined the International Circle during her first semester and that is where she was encouraged to join GSS. She has also done some mentoring. She has tried reaching out about some events, but many people don't respond.
 - viii. Akhtar added summer income for international grad students as a consideration.
- c. Students in bad work environments
- i. Akhtar said that many international students end up in bad environments and don't know how to change their program or feel scared doing so. She doesn't think OISS has much support for this and wonders if there is anything GSS can do.
 - ii. Natasha agreed that there are many more students than we probably realize who are in toxic work environments and that it is probably more common with international students. She mentioned not knowing when and how to bring it up, fear of retaliation, and fear of losing funding as reasons why people might stay in this situation. Sometimes things are swept under the rug when brought up to administrators and this can allow faculty members to take advantage of students. Says that there seems to be very little support on campus that provides an advocate for the grad student in this situation. Natasha added that GSS could have periodic closed sessions where students could talk to GSS without being on the record in an official meeting.
- d. Caroline suggested really leveraging in-person activities in the fall to bring people together more.
2. Health
- a. Healthcare coverage

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- i. Dom mentioned potentially focusing on either vision or dental. Karla doesn't think we should narrow the focus to only one thing. Everyone needs vision and dental.
 - ii. Chandra added that it is very expensive for international students without insurance.
 - iii. Caroline suggested we collaborate with the undergrad Student Senate since the SHBP covers them as well. Most undergrads probably don't use this plan, but their support might help since Grad Students are being treated more like undergrads, rather than staff, in this case. She mentioned that it is a national problem that vision and dental are not considered basic healthcare and added that you do get half-off at Aspen Dental.
 - iv. Emily mentioned the Health & Wellness Committee was working on this last year before COVID. Jovana ran into issues getting vision and dental approved. She might be helpful in starting those conversations to know where things left off.
 - v. Akhtar added that for illnesses related to eyes, there is coverage, but she doesn't see how this is different from regular vision problems. These should be covered as well.
 - vi. Natasha stressed the importance of healthcare coverage for parents and prenatal care.
- b. Mental health
- i. Kendra mentioned that Peggy Goetz (PACS) and Dovev would likely be willing to collaborate with groups or walks.
 - ii. Chelsea would like to see more of GSS working with departments across campus to have professors include a mental health statement on their syllabus. Mental and physical health should be treated equally. Pushing for this to be a norm.

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- iv. Akhtar mentioned that when international students come, they have no credit to check. Landlords should be aware that grad students are good tenants and have a reliable source of income, but many aren't aware of this. Could there be a way to let local landlords know? Sumeyra agreed and said that finding a roommate was helpful because she didn't have a credit score. This would be more difficult for someone moving with a family. OISS could potentially help with this.
 - b. Transportation
 - 5. Community building
 - a. Durham
 - i. Natasha suggested promoting department and program seminars. Many people don't realize how many others are doing relevant work on campus. The Grad School could host cross-disciplinary seminars in the future.
 - b. Other campuses
 - i. Sumeyra said it was helpful this year that everything was virtual. We could continue to do this even as things open. Dom also thinks a couple in-person events on other campuses could be good.
 - c. USNH
 - 6. Fees
 - a. Fee review process
 - i. Akhtar believes grad students who are working for the university shouldn't be paying mandatory fees. She suggested focusing on no fees for students on assistantships but is not sure if this is possible.
 - ii. Natasha agrees, she tried getting her fees waived one semester when she was not going to be near campus and travelling to collect data, but her waiver was rejected. She thinks some fees could be kept, but some should be waived.
 - 7. Internal

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- a. Helping new GSS members
 - i. Chika would have liked some handover notes from a previous senator.
 - ii. Sumeyra did help new members but what she saw was that even with orientation, people did not know exactly what was expected of them specifically. She suggested pairing them up with a mentor for the first semester.
 - b. Committee engagement
 - c. Caroline suggested at the beginning of the year having biosketches of everyone that includes their name, how long they've been in GSS and things they've worked on to get to know each other.
 - d. Natasha was impressed with the meeting agenda and minutes being ready and overall organization from leadership this year.
- c. Upcoming Events
 - i. Disability: Inclusivity & Reality Panel
- 8. Open Forum – POGSS**
- a. None
- 9. Adjournment**
- a. Chika made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Sumeyra. Meeting adjourned at 1:40 pm