

Graduate Assembly Meeting Minutes

Mar 26, 2020

Venue: WebEx meeting

1. Natalie calls to begin the meeting
 - No roll call was taken as attendance records of confirmed participants are available on WebEx.

2. Updates from the e-board
 - VP of Fairfax – Atis is looking at ways to reduce the cost of graduation regalia.
 - To provide a more affordable option of rent or a less expensive purchase option (the current rent rate is \$170 and the purchase rate is at least \$800 and above)
 - VP of Arlington – Sofiyat announced that well-being events will be moved online and will be opened to all campuses.
 - President's Updates
 - Natalie announced that she is attending the Board of Visitor meetings, and staying updated with the latest news on the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The cancellation of the Mason Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference was also announced.
 - GAPSA is thinking of creative ways to engage with graduate students online. Suggestions are welcomed.
 - The April graduate assembly meeting will still take place in April via WebEx.

3. Austin provided guidelines on how to conduct WebEx meetings. These guidelines were also emailed to participants before the meeting.

4. Rose Pascarell, Vice President of University Life, provided updates.
 - She will be meeting the University's finance committee Board of Visitors next week.
 - Several University leadership groups are meeting daily to keep updated on the COVID-19 outbreak and how it affects the university.
 - There is an emergency operation group that consists of 30 staff that meet every morning.
 - The President's team has been meeting daily for the past two weeks to handle institutional decisions and these decisions are advised by medical experts, locally, nationally, and internationally.
 - All student-focused services are completely virtual at this point.
 - Student Health Services will continue to operate under specific conditions serving over 500 residential student population (international, and out of state students who are not safe to go back, or obstacles such as having access to tech, computers).

- Insurance corporation (United Healthcare) is extending open enrollment for students to purchase student health insurance due to the COVID-19 situation.
- CAPS will begin counseling virtually while holding many workshops focused on anxiety and adjustment to crisis available to all students.
- UL's main page has updated the general response to COVID-19 along with standard operating hours.
- Students are provided with guidance and tips for online learning as the University moves to remote instructions.
- Over \$1 million has been requested from Mason's Student Emergency Assistance Fund by over 500 students seeking emergency funds in response to lost jobs off-campus, to pay utility bills, to purchase emergency travel tickets home, or needing hardware in order to access technology to complete course assignments. Students in need of assistance can retrieve the form available on UL main website.
- The University will be launching an external fundraising campaign to raise money for the fund.
- All students are eligible for a free membership to BurnAlong – free online classes, meditation, mindfulness, pilates, etc.
- To focus on self-care and mental health in these times.
- On Apr 2, the BOV will meet to review (Finance) tuition increase for next year. The University has a *six-year plan* – where tuition may be increased up to 3.5% for *in-state and out-of-state* graduate students. The public is allowed to make comments to provide insights into the decision.

5. Updates from Dr. Laurence Bray, Associate Provost for Graduate Education

- The Office of Graduate Education is dedicated to making this period of time as good as possible for graduate students.
- There are several open communications (lines) available for students to inform any issues to the Office of Graduate Education.
- At the end of last week, the office has developed a FAQ for graduate students, a collective work aimed at answering questions to assistantships, academic success, travel, and internships for graduate students.
- Students are free to reach out to the Office of Graduate Education if there are additional questions.
- Grading options are being discussed to finalize alternative grading options from graduate students.
- Students who are in need of computers/laptops should first start with their program and department. The Office of Graduate Education will do its best to support these requests.

- There is no anticipation of decreasing assistantships now or the near future even with the University going online. Department heads are encouraged to continue working with graduate students.
 - A fund will be set up for students who are unable to conduct research (forced to stay an extra semester or year).
 - Healthcare insurance is going to be extended by providers.
 - The University is also looking to create any options that can be extended to graduate students to lighten the stress. For example, to work with students to take an incomplete and to allow an extended period to withdraw from university deadlines.
6. The e-board proposed a constitutional amendment to strike clause 1, of Article 3, Section 3.

Currently Reads:

Section 3. Vice Presidents of Each Respective Campus

- The Vice President of each campus shall be elected by the entire electorate of that campus.
- The Vice President of Fairfax Campus shall act in official capacity on behalf of the President in the absence of the President.
- The Vice Presidents are responsible for meeting with the advisers to GAPSA on regular bases.
- Voting – The Vice Presidents shall hold voting seats General Assembly meeting.
- The Vice President of Fairfax Campus shall act as liaison to the Student Government and Faculty Senate.
- The Vice President of each campus shall hold town halls each semester to ascertain the campus climate as a means to help set the agenda for the General Assembly meetings.
- The Vice President of each campus shall be responsible for all communication from their respective campus.

Proposed Change

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- Austin led to collect votes from representatives to strike clause 1, of Article 3, Section 3. Representatives voted to remove “1. The Vice President of each campus shall be elected by the entire electorate of that campus”.