

GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE

MINUTES OF MEETING

Monday, December 5, 2022. Time: 8:00am | *Meeting called to order by* Vice-President, Ijaz Ul-Haq

In Attendance

Goodness Nze-Igwe	Patrick Payne	GUESTS
Omid Sedighi	Colin Levaunt	Dan Coutu
Ijaz Ul Haq	Dan Peipert	Rich Holschuh
Villalpando, Michael A	Shahmeer Patel	BBailey4
Ye-Jee Kim	Sandra Nnadi	Jill Cresey Gross
Justin MH Salisbury	Atoosa Parsa	Jacques T. Watso
Jenan Husain	Baxter Worthing	Jon B
Bren Marie Cable	Erica Lamkin	Cricket Bridleman
Liz Sparks	Daniel Munteanu	Madeleine Gosselin Wright
Julian Armada	Cynthia Forehand	Francine Poitras Jones
Alison Hall	Bella Bennett	Aerin Stack
Anna Kim	Lucy Drummond	Shaun Robinson
Yasaman Pedari	Nina L. Smolyar	

Approval of previous meeting minutes

Motion to approve previous meeting minutes moved by Patrick Payne, seconded by Jenan Husain.

President's report

- I. Justin Salisbury presented the intent to have two public forums in the spring semester. A public forum where grad students can discuss topics of pressing interest. Public officials or experts on the topic can be invited to the forum.
- II. In 3rd Senate meeting, it was agreed that the draft letter of apology to the Vermont state recognized tribes be referred to the student affairs committee for amendment. The draft letter of apology was amended and sent to the Senators before the meeting.
- III. Ijaz called for discussion and a motion to approve the amended draft letter. Baxter moved the motion to accept the letter of apology, seconded by Patrick Payne. Discussion opened with Lucy Drummond stating that an indigenous people working group in the Rubenstein school exists and are trying to

- understand these issues. Lucy asked if there was any research conducted to understand the reasons why the Odanak was questioning the identity of the Vermont State recognized tribes. Justin replied that the video of the UVM spring event was enough reason to take a stand and draft an apology letter.
- IV. Dan Cotou, a guest, and member of the Vermont Abenaki tribe made a comment in response to Lucy's question. He stated that the event that happened in spring was more of the Odanak's self-interest rather than an issue of validity of the Abenaki population in Vermont. The position of the Vermont Abenaki tribe is that the Odanak stop with their aim of destroying an entire population with their claims. He further stated that the Odanak claims are neither valid nor healthy.
 - V. Colin Levaunt stated he had great fear of being placed in a position to choose certain native voices over others and had moral difficulty trying to figure out which way to go in the matter. Ijaz explained that we all have the right to vote or not and there is nothing wrong in the choice of our voting options. Patrick Payne suggested that there might be a need to have the discussions on the matter offline before voting so that senators who feel hesitant to discuss such topics can find time to clearly understand the issues and express their discomfort.
 - VI. Nina Smolyar, a graduate student at the Rubenstein school stated that a group is working to invite Dr Kim Tolbert, an indigenous person and expert on identity issues to speak on such matters. She also emphasized on the need for more information that people can learn from and digest before acting on approving the letter. She also stated that as a graduate student represented by GSS, she would not approve the letter of apology and advised that the GSS put the brakes on the letter and do more work before acting on the Apology letter.
 - VII. Jacques Watso, the tribal leader of the Abenaki First nation of Odanak spoke to the Senate that he was at the event in April 2022 and was one of the panels. He proposed that the GSS meet with the council of chiefs and ask questions directly before any apology letter is sent.
 - VIII. Rich Holschuh, the Chair of the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs stated that the GSS had not met with the four Vermont recognized tribes. He also stated that there has been no direct dialogue between the Odanak people and the Vermont Abenaki, though the Vermont Abenaki has asked for dialogue but was refused. He suggested that if UVM wants to remain neutral in the matter then they should not showcase a unilateral presentation, rather UVM should stand back and not take sides.
 - IX. Ijaz called for a vote on the amended apology letter, but Patrick suggested that the senate cast secret ballot due to the sensitivity of the issue and concerns raised, this would prevent senators from feeling that their vote is swayed by the content of the topic. The secret ballot could be done through e-mail or sent to the GSS Secretary.
 - X. Justin asked how we might follow a secret ballot considering that the GSS constitution requires that everything we do is public. Patrick replied that within the GSS constitution is the Robert's rule which allows us conduct meetings in a way that protects minority opinions so while the voting is secret, the results of the votes will be made public. Ijaz asked the Senate if voting should be held secretly or publicly, and Sandra suggested that we consider all the recommendations for meetings with the tribes before we carry out the voting. Jenan Husain agreed with Patrick and Sandra on the idea of secret voting and having talks with the tribes.
 - XI. Based on the recommendations, Ijaz suggested that we keep the letter for further discussion. Baxter Worthing and Patrick Payne withdrew the initial motion to vote on the amended apology letter based on the context of information received at the meeting. A motion was moved by Patrick Payne to request that the Executive Council clarify within the constitution the voting procedures relating to secret ballots.

Treasurer report

Yasaman Pedari stated that all expenditure for Fall semester has been made and no current funding requests from club organizations. The GSS financed the Orlando Mixer event and planned for the Graduate hooding ceremony. Shameer Patel moved the motion to approve the budget, it was seconded by Jenan Husain.

Stipends Committee presentation by Chair, Bren Marie Cable

- The Stipends committee has been able to investigate the differences between colleges ability to pay graduate student wages.
- Propose that all colleges work towards paying the 32k that RSENR is able to pay students and figure out what steps are involved in the process.
- Draft a resolution that ensures UVM keeps with the promise to increase pay that reflects the Vermont Basic needs and livable wage which is based on a 40-hour week. The idea of increasing wage and benefits will enhance more R1 quality students to attend and stay at UVM.

Events Committee presentation by Chair, Anna Kim

- Anna Kim thanked all the senators for their participation on the GSS events.
- She solicited that committee members reach out to the events committee if they have plans for an event in spring. The events committee can help with planning and additional ideas.

Professional Development Committee presentation by Chair, Omid Sedighi

- Omid Sedighi stated that from Jan 23rd to Jan 27th we would have events with the speakers from the Career center, Office of International Education, and UVM Alumni.
- There is also a plan for a research workshop in mid-April.

Gender Equity committee presentation by Chair, Liz Sparks

- The committee organized a Ted talk and will work on advertisements that can increase engagement and attendance.
- The committee will also work with the events committee in planning a drive for a women's shelter.

Housing committee presentation by Chair, Patrick Payne

- Discussions concerning transport and accommodation are ongoing.
- Planning on a Housing survey for the 2022/2023 session

New business

No new business

Adjournment 8:58pm
