



Student Government Association

Student Government Council – Modesto A. Maidique Campus

GPSC Committee

Meeting Date: October 12th, 2020

Start Time: 1:00 pm

- Welcome and Call to Order
- Roll Call

Chair: Shahnawaz Rafi

Shahnawaz Rafi	present
Christian Perez	present
Sandro Alvarez	present
Kamila Fernandez	present
Nitya Ramalingam	present
DeMarcus Snipes	present
Dean Andres Gil	present

Dr. Lidia Kos	present
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- **Open Forum**
 - No Comments

- **Old Business**
 - No comments

- **New Business**

1. Graduate Student Survey

- The committee introduces itself to Dr. Kos and Dr. Gil.
- Rafi presents the graduate survey to the committee and those in attendance
- He describes that the survey was for graduate students who came from several departments suffering from mental health issues and advisor problems.
- Survey is based on any challenges as an FIU graduate student and the different challenges they have experienced.
- Question 5 discusses the various options you have to speak with as a graduate student regarding your communication issues and problems at FIU.

- Questions 6 and 7 provides an open discussion where students can provide their own experiences.
- In question 8 we are asking if somebody has been experiencing a mental health issue and what are we doing in order to address those factors.
- In question 11, we are asking why they haven't contacted any counseling services to see that they can communicate the mental health issues with the appropriate party.
- In question 12, we ask if the courses you are addressing are relevant to your research or not.
- For question 13, we are asking if they received any specific guidelines on how to conduct their research from the graduate department head and advisor.
- For question 14, the question attempts to see if a student received specific guidelines that would help them to advance forward in their graduate degree.
- In question 16, we ask why they dropped from their current graduate program or not.
- For question 18, we are trying to see if students have a knowledge of the options they have at UGS to help them advance their graduate degree.

- For question 20, we ask if you believe that your experience as a graduate student at FIU could be better with multiple opportunities.
- Dean Gil, asks are there any similar surveys already being done with graduate students across the university?
- He believes the process of approving the survey requires the general council and academic affairs.
- Some questions from a legal perspective must have a statement regarding places they can contact if they have a mental health problem.
- A study from many years ago focused on suicidal ideation and required that the survey provide a statement.
- The survey may acquire IRB approval due to the mental health issues asked in the survey.
- Open-ended questions may provide more challenges for analyzing the data later on.
- In terms of the harassment and racial discrimination issues you should talk to your graduate program director not UGS.
- The questions on harassment and discrimination may need to be flushed out a bit better.

- He recommends that the committee creates a **focus group of students going question by question for the students to see if their feedback leads to a change of questions.**
- The current circumstances related to the COVID19 pandemic may affect the response to these questions in the current survey.
- Dr. Kos speaks.....
- Dr. Kos asks if we are sending out the survey based on the GPSC or the UGS? And who has access to this data?
- Rafi owns the results of this survey. Dr. Kos says that if you were to send this to the graduate council it may take months to be sent out with UGS backing.
- Dean Gil says that the general concern of the university is that too many surveys are being sent out to students.
- He says that the graduate students must say that its important and it may be simpler to send out the survey based solely on GPSC.
- Then GPSC can come to the graduate school and present the results collected from the GPSC survey.
- Make it clear that we state that the GPSC wants to pursue this road.

- Dr. Kos says that in her experience over the last year sending the survey to Diana who deals with the legal ramifications of surveys will lead to the survey being sent to the general council at FIU slowing the process.
- The best approach would be for us to send it to UGS, and it would be wise to reach out to your colleges and graduate students in your program. It would be best to reach to your constituents on Facebook and/or Instagram to receive feedback for the survey.
- You can then look at the responses you get and tell UGS what issues were discovered in the survey's results.
- There is too much in terms of what we're asking... a bit too broad, maybe best to conduct a focus group on this research.
- It may be difficult to dissect what we're focused on and lead to only students that aren't feeling too good already.
- Dean Gil and Dr. Kos ask use to think about What can we do in our role of representing our students? It's most effective to focus on one topic solely.
- We must determine what is important for us and what we can have an impact on.
- Dean Gil speaks....
- He says he's assuming that we are trying to identify a certain proportion of students that are more focused on in terms of the issue in the survey.

- He says that if you put, I Don't Know as the first option many responses tend to choose that first option.
- He states that it would be wise to advise legal to support the survey through the listserv of UGS.
- If we go through the graduate student listserv, we could go through the student affairs office.
- Dr. Kos speaks...
- She states that in the last three attempts they attempted to send a survey, that she has been waiting for a month and a half. The general council is working a bit slower.
- Dean Gil suggests that we look into the options of what we have to send out to the students or communicate with the students.
- A national study of several universities passed through the UGS and it was focused entirely on one simple question.
- All it takes is to find one graduate student in each program to help spread the word.
- Rafi speaks...
- He states that the last GPSC committee sent out a survey that didn't receive a great response from graduate students.

- Dr. Kos speaks...
- She states that she didn't want to bombard the graduate students with the surveys.
- The responses often include a why are you bothering response from many students, which is why we must be sure it's a good reason.
- Dr. Kos mentions how when she sent out the black graduate student survey she received many emails with interesting responses.
- If GPSC extends an invitation directly it may be more wise than sending out a survey with Claudia and Dr. Kos.
- Dr. Gil speaks...
- A short introduction regarding what we seek to accomplish with this survey would be wise and it grabs the students interest.
- They agreed that they will find a way to get out the survey and help out the GPSC committee.
- But we must finalize the question solely on one sole topic and sometimes it doesn't help you get the results you are seeking for data analysis.

2. UGS Townhall: Inviting appropriate guest speakers and graduate student concerns

- In regard to the former townhall we were scheduled to meet in March but due to the pandemic the event was postponed.
- Dr. Gil discusses that we can go back and attempt to do the townhall sometime during the Spring semester.
- He suggests that we can redo it and reschedule it for the beginning of the spring semester.
- Dr. Kos has notes regarding the points that they were going to discuss at the townhall back in March.
- The plans for the Spring are that students are most likely to be more face to face based however entirely on the current COVID19 situation that we have.
- They will touch base on the progress of this townhall being in person or virtual.

3. Graduate School Deans List (Master's Degree Students)

- Sandro speaks regarding his initiative for a graduate student deans list
- He expressed that the deans list across all the departments in the university would be great for Masters degree students to be recognized for their academic achievements.

- He expressed that this was one of his primary initiatives that he sought to write as a senator.
- He expresses that Masters students in his degree stated that after two or three years in their degree they would not receive any recognition for their academic achievements, just solely a degree.
- He states that he has gotten 40 responses from Masters degree students and that 70% of these students have expressed support for such a deans list for Masters degree students.
- Dean Gil speaks....
- He states he has no position on this initiative and that several graduate schools do have a deans list with specific criteria.
- He states that they must be separated by college and that some places this comes from the dean of the graduate school.
- Dr. Kos speaks...
- She states that already doing a graduate degree is already considered meaningful and that its expected for graduate students to perform at a high academic level. Dean Gil interjects stating Alabama Huntsville has a dean's list for graduate students.
- Dean Gil states that the value of the deans list may help for applying for a PhD program or another track being beneficial in the long run.

- Dr. Kos states that graduate students tend to get very high marks in terms of grades and productivity.
- Sandro states he's doing a master's in public administration.
- Dr. Kos will check with the registrar's office to see if they can progress this initiative.
- Dean Gil states that the criteria for the Huntsville program looks at GPA, course load, and one other criteria. Recommends we read it.
- Dean Gil states that if you completed a graduate program that shows you that you've completed a professional degree.
- A preference may be given by the dean of the program, and if it's done by college the criteria may vary.
- He's supportive. We just have to figure out how to go about it moving forward.

4. The student advocacy committee meeting for the Meet your Deans event (Proposed Dates: 11/06/2020, 11/13/2020)

- The SGA is proposing a potential event for Deans to attend an SGA sponsored event.
- Dr. Gil states whether its fine, that it works for him. He says that he will be able to attend the two event dates.
- Dr. Kos states that it's dependent upon the time of the event.

- Sandro states that the event itself is at 6 PM, and we were provided both options of either the 6th or 13th.
- She states that yes she can attend a meeting at 6 PM.
- We will follow up with the deans to attend the event.

5. Graduate student concerns with advisors and washroom issues for Muslim students.

- Students possibly from the electrical engineering department came and visited the GPSC to express their grievances regarding their religion.
- The committee is attempting to see if there is any way that Muslim students can help combat any issues they're experiencing as Muslim students.
- These students contacted the committee by email and shared their stories with us.
- They also never expressed if they met with their department chair or not.
- Dr. Gil discusses that they will investigate this matter to see if there is no problem.
- They will investigate the issue and try to see what steps they can take in terms to trying to figure out what's going on.

- GAB will be presenting soon and look at the issues regarding the graduate school experience.
- Little separate rooms where everybody attended in regard to the graduate council.
- Michelle Thompson will be attending on Wednesday as part of the alumni series event for UGS.
- Certain names of Alumni and lists of Alumni would be perfect.
- Henry from NCI would be awesome to represent the certain careers for the graduate student community.
- He's from the national cancer institute.
- Dr. Kos states that people who most recently graduated would be most appropriate to attend this event.
- She says that having someone to speak regarding their recent graduate experience and current post doctorates would be most appropriate.
- Rafi states he's already emailed Dr. Eugene from the FAU business school.
- We will send an email regarding who to invite for this potential meeting.
- Dean Gil states we can get the lieutenant governor Jeannette Nunez with no problem.

- It would have to be alumni who have attended FIU graduate school.

6. Data acquisition Fellowship issues with major advisor and department itself

- Rafi discussed the DAF that was discussed between the GPSC and deans.
- Dr. Gil states that this was for giving travel money to students in particular.
- He states that this was focused on a research fellowship not necessarily a data acquisition fellowship.
- The Gil research fellowship would represent this particular point and was created at sometime last fall.
- Dr. Kos states that there is money in the budget for this initiative
- She says that she will let Dean Gil know about the fellowship initiative
- She says that this fellowship would be for doctoral students that would advance to candidacy.
- Dr. Gil states that he will take a look at it today.
- Dr. Gil says that he will attempt to see if that is in the budget for this year.

7. Graduate Advisory Board Status

- GAB is in the process of selecting the GAB members and that Dr. Kos plans to help make GSAW a great event.

- Dr. Kos states that the graduate advisory board will be meeting very soon and that they are currently shifting through a large selection of applications for GAB.
- She will notify the committee once a set date is agreed upon and a board is settled.

8. GSAW preparations and concerns whether the event will be virtual/in-person. What kind of format will the event have in place?

- Christian raises the topic of GAB and GSAW preparation for the Spring semester.
- He states that given the virtual nature of the meeting in the Spring that it would be wise to follow a certain platform conducted by other research conferences virtually.
- He provides the example of the Biomolecular Sciences Institute conference where they appointed students to certain break out sessions judged by an appointed faculty member of the institute.
- Dr. Kos states that she enjoyed the BSI conference and felt that the format was appropriate given the virtual environment we are dealing with in this COVID period.
- She states that it is helpful to get out the abstract communication earlier in the year to receive more interest in the GSAW event but that we need to make sure we know the specifics of the event before we send out communication.

9. GPSC budget allocation

- Rafi asks if in Spring 2021 whether there will be any openings for physical travel for students for students.

- Dean Gil states that international travel that comes to the research office first is being approved.
- He says that conferences seem to be virtual still due to pandemic circumstances.
- He states that he could attempt to get more information and that they are open to receiving any applications in regards to travel related issues.
- He says that there is no blanket prohibition regarding student related traveling concerns.
- He will look into the issue and that some students they are approving travel funding for data collection purposes.
- Dr. Kos states that DA's have been approved for many students if it helps advance their research for their dissertation.
- Dean Gil states the research office would consider any research that is domestic, but for international research they need to consider specific issues.

6) Announcements

- Demarcus introduces himself to the deans in attendance and states that he looks forward to helping progress graduate student initiatives.

Adjournment

Meeting is adjourned at 2:42 PM