

# UT Dallas Student Government

## *Senate Meeting Minutes*

### Tuesday, September 22, 2020

#### **Call to Order**

*Called to Order at 5:15 PM*

#### **Roll Call**

#### **Approval of the Minutes**

- *Approved*

#### **Approval of the Agenda**

- *Approved*

#### **Announcements**

- No announcements

#### **Visitors**

##### Dr. Gene Fitch, Jr., Vice President for Student Affairs

- Welcomes and congratulates the new senators on being selected to represent the UTD student body

##### Dr. Amanda Smith, Dean of Students, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs

- Stresses the overall importance of senator attendance and participation in senate meetings
- Notes that senators are meant to represent the interests of the UTD student body. It is imperative for them to listen to their peers

##### Dr. Marilyn Kaplan, Associate Dean for Jindal School of Management

- Nothing to Report

#### **Ex-officio reports**

##### Briana Lemos, Director of Student Development

- Praises Sara and Rutendo for starting off the year strong and encourages other senators to do so as well
- Encourages senators to apply for the scholarship opportunity posted in the general student government channel

#### **Officer reports:**

##### President: Sara Brennan (sara.brennan@utdallas.edu)

- State of the University Address - will officially be going out in October
- Notes that she is working with the UT System Student Advisory Council, COVID Committee as vice chair- open to hearing any ideas regarding COVID-19 relief
- University Wide Committees - a lot of the committees have already started meeting, highlighting the importance of submitting applications to be appointed to these committees. Notes that you don't have to be a senator to be appointed to a committee.

Vice President: Rutendo Chando (rutendo.chando@utdallas.edu)

- Planning a Virtual Retreat for senators- this should include team building exercises, training courses, discussing projects and ideas for the year, etc.
- UTSSAC, Racial Justice Committee - System wide resolutions, asking to share any ideas that can be implemented system wise

Secretary: Hiba Benelbar (hib180000@utdallas.edu)

- Attendance Points - explains the attendance system, notes that there were quite a few absences in the previous week
- Governing Documents Review Committee - if anyone is interested in serving on this committee, please let me know. I will reach out afterwards.

Treasurer: Mathi Siva (mxs171130@utdallas.edu)

- Introduction - if anyone has any questions about budget or how to make allocations, please reach out.

Judicial Board Chair: Jared Brooks jared.brooks@utdallas.edu

- Explains that points accrued for excused or unexcused absences or tardies will start to count against senators starting this week
- Working with Briana to set up an email that members can directly email regarding attendance that will be visible to all members, but until then, just email him & cc Sara, Rutendo, and Hiba

**Committee Reports**

Academic Affairs Committee: Ayoub Mohammed (ayoub@utdallas.edu)

- Committee Action Plan - Identified in the meeting what issues the committee would like to tackle
- 2 members are assigned to each issue - 4 issues across 8 members
- Open educational resources(John V, Caitlin), academic advising (Rose, Saba), honor lock (Jared, Kruthi), continuity of asynchronous learning methods (Josh, Mohammed)
- Ayoub Mohammed will follow up on the transfer equivalency tool project from last year

Communications Committee: Paulina Hruskoci (paulina.hruskoci@utdallas.edu)

- Social Media Update - Encourages senator to follow and interact UTDSG on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook
- Planning to improve social media baseline numbers over the next year
- AirPods from the raffle from Spring have been shipped to the winner
- Notes the committee is receiving direct messages and emails from people interested in joining SG
- The Communications Committee will begin to reach out for Senator shoutouts on social media and committee update newsletters
- If other committees are interested in hosting a virtual town hall, please reach out to Paulina or anyone on the Communications Committee

Graduate & International Affairs Committee: Sandhya Subramani (sandhya.subramani@utdallas.edu)

- Nothing to Report

Legislative Affairs Committee: Angel Hemme (angel.hemme@utdallas.edu)

- Plans to get out the vote for the 2020 presidential election- this includes work on a voter registration information packet. The committee is currently working on infographics and flowcharts to post on to social media as well.
- Is considering reaching out to UTD students regarding the 2020 election via UTD email. Maintains that if this is not a viable solution, her team will use social media to disseminate this information instead

Residential Student Affairs Committee: Blake Lawyer (bpl170001@utdallas.edu)

- Nothing to Report

Student Affairs Committee: Neha Khan (neha.khan@utdallas.edu)

- Asked if the Wellness Committee will have an updated Title IX training
- Wellness Committee indicated a town hall seminar for faculty on how to cope with change will happen -thought it would be nice to do this for students as well. She is reaching out to the counseling center to see if it can be a possible partnership
- Asked for students to participate in next month's domestic violence awareness month- something we could feature on social media & have information posted on their as well

Technology Committee: Vignesh Vasan (alexander.quach@utdallas.edu)

- Hack-a-thon (WEHack) - Upcoming October 10th/11th; It is UTD's first non-binary hackathon promoting women and non-binary students
- Website Ideas- In the process with updating everything with new senators and new projects

Green Initiative Adhoc Committee: Allyson Deverse (ajd170001@utdallas.edu)

- Nothing to Report

**Old Business**

**New Business**

- Appointment of Senators:
  - Rutendo moves to confirm the appointment of senators*
  - Vignesh seconds*
    - Ian Berry
      - EPPS Senior who has previously served on UTD SG as a senator, currently philanthropy chair for Kappa Sigma, and member of John Marshall Pre-Law Society. Will use his previous leadership experience in order to enact desired change on campus. Participated in the legislative affairs committee in the past. Helped organize the Party at the Polls event in March.
    - Josh Gammage - Withdrew application

- Questions
  - Thomas: Have you been involved in any political action committees or party aligned groups?
  - Ian: Indicates that he has tried to stay neutral along party lines and stays independent but has worked with groups like that in the past
  - Hiba: What kind of committees are you interested in serving on?
  - Ian: Interested in legislative affairs, but also could be interested in academic affairs

*Senators leave the room for deliberation*

*Ian Berry is appointed to senator position*

- WEHack Allocation:

*Vignesh moves to discuss allocation of funds to the WeHack event*

*Hiba seconds*

*Motion passed*

*Vignesh moves to open a 5 minute discussion about the allocation*

*Ayoub seconds*

*Motion Passed*

- Ayoub: Why have you not accounted for a third place prize in the budget?
- Vignesh: Explains that he doesn't want to overburden the budget, noting that there are two other similar events next semester which ultimately lead him to cut out the 3rd place prize

*Ayoub moves to open a short discussion to raise the allocation to \$2,000*

*Majd seconds*

*Motion Passed*

- Thomas: How much money does SG have to allocate for things like these?
- Sara: About \$27,000 for the academic year
- Jared: Do we have to make a decision about the specifics about the 1st, 2nd, 3rd prizes right now?
- Sara: No
- Jared: Well \$2,000 is about 7% of our overall budget. Advises against amending the allocation to \$2,000

*Sara moves to vote on \$2,000 WeHack Allocation*

*Ayoub seconds*

*Motion is passed*

*Allocation is approved by majority of the senate*

- Approval of Bylaws Amendments

*Rutendo moves to suspend the portion of the bylaws that states that the senate must wait until the next senate meeting to vote on proposed amendments*

*Paulina seconds*

*Motion passed*

*Rutendo moves to discuss bylaw amendments to include addition of Diversity and Equity Committee*

*Majd seconds*

- Ayoub: Calls into question the necessity of creating a separate Diversity and Equity committee apart from the other existing committees
- Sara: Notes discontent from underrepresented students. Adds that the UTD student body has shown support for candidates who seek to amplify voices of underserved students.
- Ayoub: What are the issues that can't already be handled by other existing committees? Notes that any committee can work on projects related to diversity and equity. Why do we need to create a separate committee if this is the case?
- Sara: It is not about can or cannot; however, it is more about reinforcing the goal of diversity and equity from different angles, rather than increasing the workload of existing committees.
- Hiba: We are not calling into question whether there are structures in place that could take on this issue. We are calling into question whether these structures meet the needs of students. For example, the scope of the Student Affairs committee is very broad. It may be difficult for this committee to address the needs of minority students on campus. By shifting this workload to a more relevant committee, we may be able to improve the overall functionality of student government.
- Willie: It is counterintuitive to dedicate an entire committee to a specific issue- diversity and equity are not goals but rather a means to an end. There are better ways to address diversity and equity issues through existing committees like, for example, the Academic Affairs committee regarding inequity in grade distribution. Also, the creation of a Diversity and Equity Ad Hoc committee might not be a very good idea at this time- considering that it might be considered a partisan issue.
- Rutendo: Notes that the Green Initiative Ad Hoc Committee might also be considered a partisan issue, yet it is still in place because it represents the interests of UTD students. This is an opportunity for underserved students to be heard.
- Vignesh: This is simply about giving students an opportunity to be heard. We work for the students. If a group of students are saying they're having issues, we have to address them.
- Majd: We already have the Multicultural Center on campus that addresses issues like these. Not sure of the benefit of a committee like this.
- Sara: There is a sustainability office on campus, that doesn't mean we don't have a Green Initiative Ad Hoc committee. There are tons of offices dedicated to Academic Affairs that doesn't mean we don't have an Academic Affairs committee. We are not replacing those offices.
- Paulina: Reiterates what Rutendo said. Expresses her support for the committee
- Jared: It seems like the creation of this committee would create an overlap with other committees. Reiterates what Willie has previously stated.
- Sara: There is overlap between *all* committees. I don't think there is *any* committee that doesn't overlap with other committees.
- Sydney: Would like to reiterate what Sara, Rutendo, Paulina, and Vignesh has said
- Jaqueline: Would like to voice her support for the committee

*Thomas moves to table the discussion and begin voting*

*Majd seconds*

*Motion passed*

*Amendment passed with two-thirds of the senate voting in favor of Diversity and Equity Committee*

- Diversity and Equity Committee Appointment

*Vignesh moves to appoint Diversity and Equity Committee chair*

*Jaqueline seconds*

*Motion Passed*

- Paulina nominates Thomas Gebremichael
- No other nominations
- Thomas Gebremichael is appointed to Diversity and Equity Committee Chair

## **Closing Announcements**

### **Adjourn**

*Vignesh moves to adjourn*

*Angel seconds*

*Motion passed*