

Georgia Institute of Technology
Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 1, 12:00-1:00 PM

Voting Members	Affiliation	Role
Hamid Garmestani	MSE	Vice Chair
Reta Pikowsky	Registrar	Secretary
Teresa Snow	BIOLSCI	
Kate Williams	CTL	Chair
Guanggui Lan	ISyE	
Josephine Yu	MATH	
Joshua Eastwood	UG-STU	
Jackson Caruso	UG-STU	
Nettie Brown	GRAD-STU	
Non-Voting Members	Affiliation	Role
Calton Pu#	Faculty Executive Board	
Carla Bradley#	Counseling Center	
Standing Guests/Admin Support	Affiliation	Role
Ansley Sharp	Registrar	Admin Support
Jamaal Rasheed	Registrar	Admin Support

#Without Vote

There are 9 voting members. There are 5 needed to reach a quorum.

Members Present: Brown (GRAD-STU), Williams (CTL), Garmestani (MSE), Pu (Faculty Exec Board), Pikowsky (REG), Snow(BIOLSCI), Caruso (UG-STU), Eastwood (UG-STU)

Guests: James Black (Assistant Director, Office of Graduate Studies, for Bonni Ferri)

Standing Guests: Sharp (REG), Rasheed (REG)

1. Approval of the September 8, 2020 Minutes.
 - a. There was a motion to approve the September 8 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and approved.
2. Updates and discussion on Graduate Stipends
 - a. Dr. Ferri raised the minimum stipend to \$1,800/month for PhD students and told the units that it would be raised to at least \$2,087/month in Fall 2021.
 - i. SAFAC feels confident about this number, and supports moving forward with this increase for Fall 2021.
 - ii. Final determination is dependent on the expected budget.
 - b. Master's Stipends
 - i. Currently, Master's stipends are 2/3 of the amount of the PhD stipend.

- a. Is this a fair percentage?
 - b. Some academic units do not admit students at the Master's level.
 - a. These programs should not be included when SAFAC evaluates this stipend issue.
 - c. In some departments, students are paid at the same rate regardless of their classification as an MS or PhD student.
 - d. Should the pay be solely related to the work the student is doing, and not their degree status?
 - e. Should there be a base stipend for MS and PhD, but then flexibility for departments to increase based on additional responsibility? For example, a higher stipend for Instructor of Record, or head TA position?
- c. Annual stipend increases
- i. Dr. Ferri's office wants SAFAC to recommend that graduate stipends be increased each year (with the final determination on an amount made by executive leadership based on available finances).
 - a. This would no longer be left to the discretion of individual schools.
 - ii. By providing an increase each year, it will be less likely Georgia Tech will fall behind the curve and have to scramble to catch up to the stipends offered by peer institutions.
 - iii. The nominal minimum increase, for example, may be the same rate of pay increase that staff and faculty get. The Institute will cover that rate increase for GTAs and would ask that sponsored contracts budget for annual increases and then cover those from the contracts.
 - a. If a department decides to increase stipends at a higher rate than the requirement, they would not be required to increase.
 - iv. SAFAC will work on a proposal directing where departments must post stipend rates. This would provide greater transparency for possible new students and returning students.
 - v. What will determine the minimum stipend amount each year?
 - a. Cost of living increase?
 - b. How will departments navigate this issue if there are budget concerns?
3. Update on student voting request for Student-Faculty Expectations section of the Catalog.
- a. No vote has yet been taken by the Student Regulations Committee (SRC). Further work on the proposal was requested and SGA will follow up with the SRC after it considers and incorporates the input it received.
 - i. The Committee is concerned that the Student-Faculty Expectations are becoming too long and specific. SRC is looking for broader statement which could be added.

4. Future agenda items:
 - a. Excused absences for online or hybrid courses. We may need to circle back to this when Spring is underway, particularly if it appears Summer may continue this course offering pattern, or is all online.
 - b. Student participation in national championships or Olympic events was discussed last year without any policy or guidance being approved. This should be revisited to determine if action needs to be taken.
 - c. Textbook affordability project was introduced last year. Kate emailed Dr. Colin Potts for an update on this issue.
 - d. Potential agenda item for this year: financial impact of COVID on students. Dean of Students offers a hardship fund of \$1000.

5. Next meeting date:
 - a. Nov. 10 at 8:00 - 9:00 AM
 - i. Dr. Bonnie Ferri will join us to discuss our reactions to the questions she submitted for the Oct. 1 meeting.