

Student Government Association

The University of Texas at Tyler

- I. **Call to Order**
 - a. Time: 5:22 pm
- II. **Roll Call**
- III. **Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Last week's minutes approved
- IV. **Open Forum**
 - a. **Antonio Gomez (President of 2020 Class of Pharmacy)**- They came to express frustration regarding spring commencement after spending 200,000 dollars. They have made significant impacts on our school and community to bring our name up. When people go outside of the state of Texas, people know the name of our school. When people talk about what President Tidwell says about spring commencement on the plaza in May, how will you fit that many people? How will you do it without tickets? Students have family members from all over the world and they want to ensure that they will be able to attend. He said that I don't feel that we deserve that disrespect. If anyone has any questions, please ask them.
 - b. **President Menhennett**- explained the official position of SGA on the topic.
 - c. Gomez also mentioned that, as doctoral students, they felt that they deserved their own ceremony like the rest of the pharmacy schools in the state.
 - d. Another student (2) expressed frustration that they do not have a specific date set when May is becoming increasingly close. Can we have another ceremony? Can we have something different? We just need some answers, we haven't been told. I think that the people that are there don't even know sometimes. Some of the faculty have been helpful, but we have concerns. As part of this school, but kind of separate from the school, maybe we could have our own graduation ceremony. Our contributions to our community; we're going to be the only school with every single one of us graduating as doctoral students. All 100 of us this year will be doctors whenever we graduate.
 - e. Gomez mentioned that if you consider 2 parents for each student, that's already 200 guests. That would also accommodate people a lot better if we limit it to just pharmacy students, fast and meaningful.
 - f. Student 2 also said that they would not be willing to pay an additional fee because they have already paid so much in tuition. Whenever we free ourselves for our own graduation, we will also free up more room for our undergraduates' friends and family.
- V. **Speakers Podium**
 - a. **Colleen Swain – Associate Provost**

- i. I have no input or information on graduation. I go to every meeting and try to get more information. I go to every graduation because I like to go to every graduation. I can answer any academic affairs questions that are appropriate and in my area. Last November/December, I shared with you that the OER textbooks would be launched this semester. They have launched. There was a big press event. What is exciting, when we look at using this free PDF, by our average enrollment, for each class for Texas Politics, and Intro to American Government, it's 100,000 dollars saved. We've sent our PDFs to the UT system as well as local schools to help them save money too. It is expensive to go to school and pay for books, especially core classes. We learn from our core courses, so it kind of chaps you when you're paying so much for the textbook.
- ii. I am going to be hosting some focus groups on Course Evaluations. I want you to note that I get that sometimes you feel that you can't be honest because you don't want repercussions. I get that there is a lack of trust and worry, but what I want to tell you is that it is so important for you to be honest. I visit with a lot of undergraduate students. You can see the course evaluations at the bottom of the UT Tyler website and they're usually glowing, but then you go to Rate My Professor and it's like they're totally different people.
- iii. During these focus groups, they will give you a pen and paper and you will be asked to write questions that you feel would be better. For core courses and other majors, there are questions that you see. What are better questions that we could ask that would help faculty, chairs, and deans to make decisions? What would make the course evaluation process more trustworthy. If you'll be on the look out and spread among your constituents, I think it is important to them.
- iv. UT system is starting a summer internship program for sophomore and junior students. It is a paid 11-week at the University of Texas at Austin. They have internships for many different majors. I will send the link so that it can be in the minutes, or you can search summer internship on the UT Austin website. The deadline to apply is coming up.
- v. **Senator Karn-** How are the classrooms chosen for courses?
 1. How big is that class going to be? Some rooms are special rooms and those are assigned. Usually, it's honestly where is the best use of space?

Senator Ray- Thank you for doing work on the things that we've spoken about. Also, when would the focus groups be?

It won't be before the census date and I usually do one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening.

- i. Usually I end up sitting in the room alone. I wait 20 minutes and then I leave.
- ii. Senator Ray also mentioned that we could help ensure that students come. He also asked where course evaluations will be released? Do you know who would know?
- iii. That's institutional data but I can email them and find out a tentative release date.
- iv. Parliamentarian Hendricks mentioned changes to the Nursing degree plan. He suggested emails or notification about changes to the degree plans.
- v. We are more than happy to have students' input. It's no secret but students don't often participate. That meeting meets on Fridays once a month. That person can be responsible for bringing up changes to the curriculum.
- vi. **Treasurer Rewashdeh-** Are those OER textbooks only available for those two classes?
- vii. Yes, but some other courses do use OER resources.
- viii. **Treasurer Rewashdeh-** How do we get affordability across to Connect and all of those other resources?
- ix. I sit on that task force and the system is looking at these access codes where you pay to do the homework. Limiting your resources to one platform for a department is only helpful if you only take courses in that department. The short answer is that we're looking at it from the system-perspective. The approach we're taking at UT Tyler is to try and get faculty to adopt existing OER books.
- x. I don't think that there's an incentive or nonincentive to use an OER. Selecting a textbook is a big time deal in terms of a faculty member. Even when I don't do OER, I'm not going to have my textbook be more than \$50. We do pay attention to how much this is costing and how much the bookstore marks it up. It's just the time and access.

VI. Officer Reports

a. President Menhennett

- i. Read the recommendation that he wrote to President Tidwell regarding spring commencement and the addition of a summer commencement. (attached at the end of the minutes)
- ii. Then, he read President Tidwell's response. The president thanked the student body for our feedback, but said that he was confident in the Registrar's Office's ability to make this commencement happen extraordinarily. (attached at the end of the minutes)

- iii. I want to get you guys as much discussion as possible, so I would like to speak with you guys (the pharmacy students) so that I can get a good visual about y'all's situation.
- iv. UTSAAC is coming up, OERs and Career Success are two of my big things. Every student in the state has to go through those classes so they will save a lot of money for people all throughout the system.

b. Vice President Cooper

- i. I'm in a new position with a lot more responsibility. Im looking at planning the events, Midnight Breakfast, finals bags, Pizza with the President, etc. If y'all have any ideas, things that you've thought of or seen other schools do, please reach out to me.
- ii. President Menhennett and I will be going to UTSAAC in a couple of weeks and I'm training Aya to be treasurer.

c. Secretary Jennings

- i. Explained the new attendance spreadsheet and how to request absences through Engage.

d. Treasurer Rawashdeh

- i. Starting next week, I'll be hitting the ground running. I met with Advisor Neaves today. If you guys are interested in coming to my committee, come see me so that we can figure out a time that will work for both of us.

e. Parliamentarian Hendricks

- i. We improved our new documents. I'll be following that process through. I'll be working on election stuff and these documents.

VII. Student Voice Reports

a. Freshman Senators

- i. **Senator Astbury-** I don't have a lot to report. I talked to the bookstore about getting some more reasonable pricing for textbooks. The employees at the bookstore said that the prices are completely fixed by Barnes and Noble. Unless we get them kicked off of campus, which I have no intention of, there is really no hope there.
- ii. **Senator Reid-** I've been kind of going through a possible senator project. My plan is to get with President Menhennett in the coming days to talk about it and plan it out.

b. Soules College of Business

- i. **Senator Forster-** People feel that parking is comfortable. In the college of business, we do not have enough computers or big enough classrooms to fit IT and CIS students. Senator also suggested that students participate in hiring faculty.

c. Student Body at Large

- i. **Senator Bauder-** Students in CS have expressed similar complaints. Parking has not exactly been comfortable coming from off campus.
- ii. **Senator Karn-** College of Arts and Sciences got a revamp. Lighting has improved at Liberty Landing.
- iii. **President Menhennett-** Senator Ray has been working on similar projects recently. You may be able to do a work order.
- iv. **Senator Ray-** Some housing is covered on uttyler.servicenow.com and if there's something like that, you can put it in. If it doesn't get fixed, let me know and I'll see what I can do.

VIII. Committee Reports

- a. We will look at adding committee meetings, excluding SGAC, to general assembly meetings at the next E board meeting.

IX. Old Business

- a. No one spoke for old business.

X. New Business

a. Appointment of New Senator – Sage McAdams

- i. Hello everyone, I'm Sage. I'm a student on campus. I want to join SGA so that I can get involved on campus and let people bring their concerns to me. This is a genuine organization and I appreciate the authenticity. I would love to be one of you guys. I'm Sage.
- ii. **Vice President Cooper-** What is your major?
- iii. Undecided.
 - 1. **Senator Mays-** I know Sage really well and I can assure everyone that he is extremely ambitious. He calls me at 2 am with ideas that he has. He is very ambitious and I think that he would be a good addition to our organization.
 - 2. Motion to vote on Sage by Senator Reid, seconded by Senator Bauder. Motion passes.
 - a. I'm part of RHA, I'm secretary for UPines. I've heard voices from the buildings and there are things that we'd like to do. There's a lot of recycling and there's a plant literally 5 miles away. Additionally, I'm secretary for the Society of Women Engineers. I'm a civil engineering major. I would like to be senator for UPines.
 - b. **Senator Roberts-** I acknowledge her accomplishments in our RHC and she's done a great job.
 - c. **Senator Long-** She was one of my residents and she's very nice. I think that she'd be a great addition.
 - d. Motion to vote Meneko in by Senator Reid. Seconded by Senator Bauder.

e. Senator McAdams and Senator Ramirez were both sworn in.

I. Senator McAdams motioned that we discuss representatives per Dr. Tidwell's request. It was seconded by Senator ???

II. **President Menhennett-** Who would be willing to sit on that board and gather and provide insight regarding commencement.

III. Antonio Gomez said that they have someone in mind that would represent the College of Pharmacy well.

IV. **President Menhennett-** The wordage that he used suggests that they want to have an opportunity for student opinion to be voiced. I just want to make sure that student opinion.

V. **Gomez-** We just want to make sure that our voice is heard in the College of Pharmacy.

VI. **President Menhennett-** I would be glad to meet with y'all as often as possible to make sure that your voice is heard.

VII. **Advisor Neaves-** I think that we should take him up on his offer to speak with us, and maybe move the meeting to another space that's larger. I think that mainly, the plan should be communicated and it may ease everyone's concerns.

VIII. **President Menhennett-** Every time that we meet, I would be glad to update y'all via email so that you guys know. This is something that definitely needs to be communicated. Who would be willing to represent SGA?

a. Senator Long, Senator Stavinoha, Senator Bauder, Senator McAdams, and Treasurer Rewashdeh volunteered

b. **Senator Ray-** Representing everyone is basically our job. You aren't the first people to come to us about graduation issues.

XI. **Advisor Comments**

a. I recommended Josh be one of the representatives because SGA has officially taken a stance on this issue. It's his job to be the voice of SGA. Dr. Tidwell also wants two more students.

b. I'm very excited for both of our new officers, Kacey and Aya. All of the things that Kacey is working on are great. Aya is very energetic and, as soon as she is officially hired, I look forward to seeing what she'll do.

c. There are 3 spots open for the College of Pharmacy. If y'all are interested in joining Student Government, y'all saw how easy it was to join. It's good to see y'all's voice. Thank y'all for being here. We're in this together and I appreciate that y'all want to engage.

d. Next week, we're switching rooms long-term. HPC 2255. Keep that in mind, don't be late. Other than that, thank y'all for being here.

XII. **Announcements**

a. Arbor Day – Feb. 15th

b. Vice President Cooper- Please remember to use the titles for people that worked hard for them, example: Dr. Swain.

XIII. Next Week's Student Voice Reports

- a.** College of Education and Psychology
- b.** College of Engineering
- c.** College of Nursing and Health Sciences

XIV. Second Roll Call

XV. Adjournment

President Menhennett's Recommendation to President Tidwell:



**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

TO: President Michael Tidwell
FROM: Joshua E. Menhennett, Student Government Association President
DATE: January 13th, 2020
SUBJECT: Official Recommendation – Spring 2020 Commencement Ceremony

President Tidwell,

During the Fall 2019 semester, it came to the attention of myself and the Student Government Association that the University of Texas at Tyler was moving on the proposal of hosting the Spring 2020 Commencement Ceremony on the Patriot Plaza.

Prior to this information being received, the SGA elected to put out a general commencement survey, connected with the questions concerning the addition of a summer commencement ceremony. The results came back with 292 supporting, 242 neither in support or opposition and 391 students voting they oppose the Patriot Plaza being used for Spring Commencement.

Considering this information, the current Student Government would like to formally recommend that the Spring 2020 Commencement Ceremony not be held on the Patriot Plaza, and instead be held in the UT-Tyler Cowan Center.

It is our belief that the space constraints, fears of changing weather and limitations for physically disabled family members are amongst fears of the graduating students.

The Student Government believes this to be the best movement in regard to overall student opinion. We hope that the correct steps are taken to make the adjustments in this regard and hope that the best interests of the students are taken into account every step of the way.

Sincerely,

Joshua E. Menhennett
Class of 2022
Student Government Association President

President Tidwell's Response:



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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 21, 2020

Joshua Menhennett, President
Student Government Association
The University of Texas at Tyler
3900 University Blvd.
Tyler, TX 75799

Dear Joshua,

I am in receipt of your letter dated January 13, 2020 regarding Spring Commencement 2020 on the UT Tyler Plaza. I am continually impressed with the professionalism, vision and responsiveness of the Student Government Association. You all do a wonderful job of representing the interests of the UT Tyler student body and your work is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for the feedback regarding the location of the upcoming Commencement Ceremony. I value the opinion of our students and appreciate the concerns you expressed on behalf of the student body. The Registrar's Office staff are the experts in this area; therefore, I have tasked them with creating a plan to make the Spring 2020 Commencement extraordinary for our graduates and their families. I have confidence that we will be able to mitigate any issues going forward with your help. I invite SGA to provide me with two or three students who will work alongside the Registrar's Office team to address the expressed concerns and to make Commencement a success.

As UT Tyler grows, we must find ways to accommodate our vast number of graduates. By utilizing the Plaza, we create an opportunity to remove the limitations presented by our campus facilities. The Plaza was designed to bring our community together and to celebrate the beauty of our campus.

I would be delighted to come and speak with SGA at an upcoming meeting to share more details of the Commencement arrangements.

Respectfully,

Michael Tidwell, Ph.D.
President

MT:jr

cc: Ona Tolliver, Vice President for Student Success