

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. **Kelly Burns**- We are on the old curriculum. Since they have changed it, we are going to finish in the summer. That's going to be like 130 people that graduate in the summer or that choose to walk in December. We are getting a degree just like anyone that's graduating in fall or spring, so why don't we have a ceremony? If it's inside, that's 140 more tickets for everyone.
 - b. **Claire Sankwich**- I feel that I did not sign up for the advanced program, the accelerated program. That means you go spring summer fall. I signed up for tradition which is spring fall spring fall. A traditional graduation is an expectation for students. It's not fair for us to have a traditional graduation. Just because we're on a new curriculum, doesn't mean that it's justified for us to not have our own ceremony, just because we get the pinning ceremony.
 - c. **Parker Coda**- I am here because of graduation. I'm the first of my siblings to graduate and the first male to get a four year degree. Why would we make my family come in the May heat and rain to see something they've waited on when they can get a guaranteed see in the Cowan Center.
 - d. **Grace Motley**- I'm here because of the commencement issue as well. I was curious as to why we have not heard from our President. We have a petition that has gone around and it has over 3 thousand signatures on it. We want to hear from him and hear how it's going to work. I don't know how 8 thousand people are going to fit on the Plaza and it's going to be hot outside. There lots of first gen students and people getting degrees. It should be a formal event respected by everybody. Everyone will be sweating outside, no one will be able to see. It won't be a respectable event. I want to change it back to the Cowan Center, which has been our tradition.
 - e. **Clarissa Canteneda**- I am a first generation student and having to tell my family that I'm not going to have a ceremony was very sad.
 - f. **Cathy Istabella**- We've worked so hard for four years or longer and we have a lot to contribute. It feels really crappy. Not everyone has the budget to come down twice for pinning and commencement. I love UT Tyler and I expected the respect to get a commencement ceremony. We deserve to be celebrated.
 - g. **Mashburn**- I don't understand why we aren't allowed to have one. We keep getting different answers. Why is UT Tyler not doing a summer graduation?
 - h. **Sam Acres**- What is everyone's goal when they go to college? It minimalizes the achievement of your degree if you don't get to walk or come back after working to get it. I feel like it's unfair that we work so hard and don't get it.



- i. **Dr. Croix**- I went to a high school that had a lot of people and our outside graduation was miserable. In May, it will either be raining and we'll have to move everything and everybody inside. Doing it outside, it makes it feel like a high school graduation. I feel like inside is a good place while outside is bad.

V. **Speakers Podium**

- a. **Lucas Roebuck**- One thing that touched me was those of you that talked about first generation students. My dad was a first generation student and I really appreciate VP Tolliver's team that works really hard to help first gen students.
- b. **We** have about 20 people on a team that have been working really hard on commencement. I understand that there are a lot of concerns. Our website has been updated, it's not a full comprehensive set of questions, because there are a lot of concerns that we're still working on. We just confirmed with a vendor that we're going to have over 8 thousand seats. We are also going to open up the Cowan Center and the HPC to host live video watches. One thing that goes on too is figuring out how many people are actually going to come. We look at historic trends to try and figure it out. It would be the worst thing in the world for us for your family that came from out of town to not be able to get a seat. President Tidwell has been out of town since last Monday. I know that the President is aware, he cares, and we agree that most of the issues are legitimate issues that we have people working very hard on. How is this going to work? We're still working on this stuff. SGA said we need to be at the table and Dr. Tidwell heard that so we now have 3 students on that committee. The challenges that you all have brought forth, we're aware of them and we're working hard to address them. We like to hear your feedback and we listen. There is a vision for what this can be. We're not in the forefront of this, there are hundreds of universities that do outdoor ceremonies for various reasons. There is an Association of Commencement Officers. The President of this Association happens to be in charge of commencement at UT Austin. We had a full day with them and we got lots of wisdom and ideas for our ceremony. Students are actively engaged in this process, but anyone is welcome to contact the President at president@uttyler.edu. Thank you all for your patience and your respect. I think that this a great model for how our democracy should run. I'll entertain questions.
- c. **Parliamentarian Hendricks**- How will UT Tyler gauge whether it's a success?
- d. **VP Roebuck**- It will depend on the feedback of students and guests following the ceremony.
- e. **Grace Motley**- Why are y'all not listening to our feedback now? Why are y'all deciding to switch it over to the Plaza? It's going to be very hot.
- f. **VP Roebuck**- We listen. We have seen how unifying it can be and we really want to have open seating. We did one time and it was a disaster. This would be a way to get more people to participate.



- g. Treasurer Rawashdeh-** How was the data gathered?
- h. VP Roebuck-** We started out with a topographical map and sent that to our chair vendor. All the safety things have been applied and then tell us how many seats we can have. There will be some obstructed views but that will be minimal.
- i. Where will there be parking?**
- j. VP Roebuck-** There will be auxiliary lots on top of the 4 thousand spots that we have. They have considered ticketing parking spots so that we can solve this problem.
- k. Where did you graduate and was it inside or outside?**
- l. VP Roebuck-** I graduated in Arkansas and it was inside. We're listening to you all. There are meetings going on and we will think about the feedback.
- m. Senator Long-** How will we deal with ticketing if there's inclement weather?
- n. VP Roebuck-** That will be dealt with well in advance and we will let you guys know when to expect us to call it.

VI. Officer Reports

- a. President Menhennett**
 - i.** There was communication from myself on behalf of the Student Government about a summer commencement. When I go to the commencement meeting, I will be glad to email you guys after I bring it up and let you all know. I've had a couple of meetings regarding commencement with various people. I've also been preparing for UTSAAC; I think I'm going to go for an officer position. It's fun stuff to go down there. A large part of it is OER resources, career success things, etc. I'll get y'all's emails so that I can facilitate information to you.
- b. Vice President Cooper**
 - i.** We go to UTSAAC next week. I've been brushing up on the information so that I know what I'm talking about. I've also been asked to sit on a search committee for the New Director of Student Life and Leadership. I've also been talking to the cabinet to plan speaker's podium visits. I've been planning events and more will come out as we start to meet with our committees.
- c. Secretary Jennings**
- d. Treasurer Rawashdeh**
 - i.** So, today I held my first SGAC meeting. I want to thank Senator Rodriguez for coming. Please take the next minute or so to complete my first Doodle Poll. I've been going over the Bylaws and Constitution so that I can fill VP Cooper's big shoes.
- e. Parliamentarian Hendricks**



Officer elections are going to be March 26-27 and Senator elections are going to be April 16-17. If you have any questions, please email sga@uttyler.edu.

VII. Student Voice Reports

a. College of Education and Psychology

- i. **Senator Stavinoha-** Our honors psychology class has been housed in RBN. We were in one computer lab that wasn't working and then this week, we were in a new one and it still wasn't working. Clearly, this is affecting more than us because they are engineering classes. We're running out computer labs to try.
- ii. **Senator Long-** The program that we need to use is difficult to use on your own computer and it will be important for us to each have computer access. I've had a complaint from a Psychology student and she contacted the professor two or three weeks before the final exam saying that they had a conflict. The professor said that they could take it after everyone else, because it wouldn't be fair for them to take it before. Then, after the final they said that it wouldn't be fair for them to take it after everyone else. Honors hosts Lyceum and they have been trying to get classes dismissed so that everyone can attend. We get the day off on the Career Success Conference and I would be excited to see us get the day off for student research.
- iii. **Senator Williams-** A lot of education majors have been upset that they keep changing our curriculum. We have a very heavy course load and that's not the plan that we signed up for when we were accepted in the school. We can't work and have to take out loans that we can't pay back. The curriculum is contradicting, we are having to buy supplies, etc for a class where they were supposed to be provided. I've scheduled meetings with the Deans.
- iv. **President Menhennett-** It would be great for everyone to meet with the heads of their constituencies.

b. College of Engineering

- i. **Senator Barakat-** I have also had students tell me about the RBN computers. I have contacted IT and I'm waiting to hear from them. I saw a malfunctioning sprinkler and was able to get it resolved with a work order.
- ii. **Senator Ray-** I went ahead and put in a work order for the rooms that you mentioned. Yes, the engineering department does deal with those and it usually has to do with IT running it. I'll work on it and I know there's a lot of problems. Maybe a third of the computers work. Next meeting, I'll let everyone know what the results are.

c. College of Nursing and Health Sciences

- i. **Senator Mays-** I'm doing the same thing as last semester, putting myself out there as a point of contact for nursing students. I'm also



Looking to recruit another nursing student to be a senator. I'm also looking into summer commencement, just to see what we can do.

VIII. Committee Reports

a. **Infrastructure-** Andrew Kraus has been very helpful. Patriot Drive should be taken care of by the end of the week. They've been working on getting it hastily taken care of. The classrooms she mentioned and some IT stuff will be taken care of as soon as possible.

b. Meeting Times

IX. Old Business

a. Polo Discussion

- i. Senator Bauder motioned to talk about polos and Senator Forster seconded it.
- ii. **Treasurer Rawashdeh-** We agreed to wear a polo but we haven't come up with a specific design. We don't want to fight over a ton of designs. I'm thinking either black or navy polos. I don't want to wear white or orange. I believe that we will get together and consider a design.
- iii. **Senator Williams-** Will they be men's and women's or unisex, and will we only get one color or both?
- iv. **President Menhennett-** It depends on how much marketing funds y'all want to use.
- v. **Senator Stavinoha-** I would like to see one provided and then be able to pay for an extra one.
- vi. **Treasurer Rawashdeh-** I would like to eliminate the stress of a dress code.
- vii. **Parliamentarian Hendricks-** I motion to table this discussion and vote until next week. (It was approved)
- viii. **President Menhennett-** If you want input, come see us or come early to the next meeting.

X. New Business

a. Spring Commencement Petition Discussion

- i. **Senator Stavinoha-** I move to discuss the spring commencement petition. (Seconded by Senator Bauder). A lot of my friends shared their story about why they signed it and I feel like it's our responsibility to hear them.
- ii. **Treasurer Rawashdeh-** My concern with the petition is that it's not UT Tyler student based. I think it's nice that the community is participating but I don't think that they have the right to do that. I want feedback from students that are walking. I think that we should possibly conduct a survey of the student body as opposed to the public.



- Senator Long-** I worry about putting out a new survey because we've already done it, endorsed it, sent it in, etc. I think that the petition shows what the UT Tyler community wants, but what more can we do?
- iv. **Senator Williams-** I agree about the survey. I think that the input of community members is important because they really care about the students. I think that we need to do something more than show them our results because clearly nothing happened with it.
 - v. **Senator McAdams-** How many people can the Cowan Center hold? Oh 2 thousand? I think that it would be good for us to wait for more information to come out before we make a strong stance.
 - vi. **Senator Green-** I think that my concern is that people feel like they aren't being heard but they are. We are listening, we just aren't doing exactly what they want.
 - vii. **President Menhennett-** We already have the platform to talk with the people in charge of it. We want to facilitate the discussion so that we can ensure that we can better have the voices of students heard and represented effectively. As we move forward, we'll be the modems for that.
 - viii. **Parliamentarian Hendricks-** I think that we need to be careful when we say that we aren't being heard because we didn't get the result that we want. We need to be careful to maintain the relationship.
 - ix. **Senator Bauder-** I think that whether it is indoor or outdoor is a crucial element, but I think that if it's going to be outside, we should do a new survey about what specific concerns students have regarding an outside ceremony.
 - x. **Senator Ray-** I noticed that there is a possibility that we have to accept that it's going to be outside. We've had students talk about that they don't want it, but students from nursing want a summer commencement and the higher degree students want their own independent ceremony. Even if we couldn't win all three, I think that we could definitely do two. We've had just as many students come and talk about those as opposed to commencement on the Plaza. I think that it would be beneficial if we put our effort into those areas.
 - xi. **Senator Long-** I think that we agree. What's done is done. A lot of students feel angry because they think they haven't been heard. I like the idea of opening up a means of communication like a qualtrics. SGA should make public the FAQ page so that students see it.
 - xii. **Senator Williams-** There wasn't a lot of information put out, so I feel like that will make people more excited about the commencement. I feel like the more that the university communicates, the more that they will feel excited.



Cooper- SGA should tell everyone that we have heard their concerns and communicated it to the administration. Instead of doing a qualtrics, what if instead we just asked everybody to email the SGA email their concerns, because we've sent out a lot of surveys and people respond less. "If you have concerns about this, email sga@uttyler.edu"

- xiv. **Senator McAdams-** I feel like this body is good at communicating from students to administration but not from administration to students.
- xv. **Parliamentarian Hendricks-** Motioned to close the discussion.
Seconded by Senator ???

b. Appointment of Judicial Board Member

- i. **President Menhennett-** You can join but you would have to give up your seat, so I will be looking outside of SGA.
- ii. **President Menhennett-** I'm still a little bit confused on this and how it works. Advisor Neaves, do you have any advice?
- iii. **Neaves-** Katherine is interested.
- iv. **Parliamentarian Hendricks-** I would like to give everyone a week so that we can hear from multiple people.
- v. **President Menhennett-** I will send out the information about the role, you can discuss with me if you want to do it or know someone who wants to do it. I think having that discussion and coming back next week, that would be good.

c. Appointment of New Senators

- i. **President Menhennett-** Katherine, you have the floor.
- ii. **Katherine-** Running for Liberty Landing, frequents the PZ, would only be able to attend 6-7 events due to prior engagements.
- iii. **Senator Stavinoha-** What prior engagements do you have?
- iv. **Katherine-** I sort of represent the Patriot Zone and I go to all of their events.
- v. **Senator Roberts-** I would like to see the housing vacancies filled.
- vi. **Parliamentarian Hendricks-** I feel that setting a precedent of people that can't attend all of the meetings isn't good.
- vii. **Senator Green-** She's also in Model UN and works really hard.
- viii. **Senator Bauder-** I would like to point out that have quorum issues in the past and so to only be able to attend half of the meetings is concerning.
- ix. **Senator Rodriguez motioned to vote on her appointment.** It was seconded by Senator ???
 - 1. There were 10 ays and 8 nays, 4 abstentions
 - 2. Katherine was appointed and sworn in as a Senator of Liberty Landing

XI. **Advisor Comments**

- a. I wish all of the guests had been able to see what y'all are doing. People are looking toward y'all and that's what y'all are for. I'm proud of y'all and it's



It's good. As Lucas said, they're going to do a better job of communicating. Once that communication plan comes out, I think we'll be able to see whether students are for it. We've heard from students and alumni and we're trying to do the best that we can. There will be photo opportunities with your peers and there's a lot of potential in this ceremony. I appreciate y'all. My piece of advice is to continue to advocate. The survey is feedback that we already have. I think that those that are on the committee already have feedback to pass along. Students keep coming and y'all should hear them out.

- b. Student voice reports are crushing it. That means that y'all are really trying to reach out to your constituents. If you are on university committees, make sure not to miss those. I'm glad that y'all are moving toward polos so that we will be recognized on campus. Keep recruiting students and doing good things.
- c. **Senator Green-** We've gotten really good on time and I'm proud of that.
- d. **President Menhennett-** Thank y'all for helping me get the recommendation out about communications.

XII. Announcements

- a. Arbor Day – Feb. 15th
- b. **VP Stuff-** Our Arbor day is February 15th, mostly out in the region out by University. We will meet at 9:30 on the O Hall patio, there will be coffee, and we will start out planting at 10:15 am. We have a few students but we'd like to have more.
 - i. We are still in consideration for a grant to from TXDOT to get sidewalks. There is limited money and a lot of applicants. The committee meets tomorrow evening so hopefully we will hear about it soon. The grant is a request for sidewalks on UT Tyler's side of Old Omen from University to Fifth street. It has been endorsed by the city of Tyler and we hope that this will finally happen and keep everyone safe.
 - ii. There's another sidewalk you need to be aware of. We're still working on one from Victory Village to Liberty Landing. We also would have an additional 230 parking spot lot. This would happen in August 2020.
 - iii. We are working on the CAS building, May 2021, and we are looking at the renovation of the UC. We received 35 million dollars for the nursing program and are working on all of the approvals so that we can move on this.
 - iv. Senator Stavinoha- All the women in the room should take a look at the committee I'm applying to.
 - v. Senator Williams- There are events in the UC this weekend that y'all should come to.
 - vi. Senator Bauder- Y'all can come to me or Senator Long so that y'all can discuss any spring commencement ideas.

XIII. Next Week's Student Voice Reports



- a. College of Arts and Sciences
- b. College of Pharmacy
- c. University Pines

XIV.

Second Roll Call

XV.

Adjournment

XVI.

Time: 7:21 pm