

# Student Government Association

## The University of Texas at Tyler

- I. **Call to Order**
  - a. **Time: 5:18 pm**
- II. **Roll Call**
- III. **Open Forum**
  - a. **Parliamentarian Ray-** Make sure that if you want to be recognized to speak, you use the raise hand feature. At the bottom on the right, you should be able to select “raise hand”. We are going to mute everybody while the meeting is going and you’ll just get unmuted if you raise your hand. Any questions?
  - b. **President Menhennett-** Is there anyone here for open forum?
  - c. **There is none**
- IV. **Speakers Podium**
  - V. **A lot of our campus leadership have come to kind of clear up all of the craziness regarding this situation. We want to have a diverse group that will be able to answer questions for students and their issues.**
    - a. **President Michael Tidwell**

How are y’all doing? Everybody okay? Hopefully you are all doing alright. There are lots of kids outside playing. It’s a beautiful day here on campus. We’ve been up to a number of things. I want to thank you guys for being supportive of the many changes we’ve gone through. We know it’s not easy to get all of these changes. Thank you guys for being strong student leaders and being understanding. All classes will be online. I would like to get some feedback about how your classes are going and how everybody is feeling.

**Treasurer Rawashdeh-** Thank you for your time. I would like to start off by introducing myself. I’m Aya Rawashdeh and I’m taking 18 hours. The thing I’m having the most difficulty with is the communication with professors, and the fact that it’s been mostly hands-off. There’s already a disconnect and it’s been harder to feel like I have the tools to get my education. I feel like my education is being compromised, which I know is no one’s fault. I’ve been primarily using email and online. One professor even gave us full credit because they refused to make their course online.

**President Tidwell-** Are y’all mostly having positive experiences with your faculty?

**Senator Rodriguez-** I’ve had an easier time than Treasurer Rawashdeh, but I’m worried about final projects.

**Par. Ray-** Our engineering work is not easily transferable to online, so it makes it difficult to turn it in and everything.

**President Tidwell-** Is there anything that we can do to be of assistance in a broader context? One opportunity that some universities are taking advantage are potential grading options for students, given the circumstances. There is some conversation about whether there should be a little leeway with grades where students can choose pass/fail since everything has changed. We’d love to get your feedback before our faculty have that conversation this week.
    - b. **Provost Amir Mirmiran**

Thank you for letting me speak to you all. Our goal has not changed. The conditions have changed, but our focus is still student success. It is difficult to convert a face to face class to an online format. We’re all in it together and we all want your success. We want to provide as much access and support as possible. One of the things we’ve done is extended the withdraw date. We want to make sure that if you feel that is the only option, you can do that. It’s not about getting an A, you are here for learning, so we want to make sure that you learn at the end of the day. We need to meet those learning objectives and make sure that this semester doesn’t have a negative affect on your future career. We are looking at options for how we can allow students to choose a pass/fail option after the letter grades have come out. For

graduate courses, they are considering making all grades an incomplete so that students have the opportunity to repeat and finish the course. Let us know by email or phone whatever we can do to provide you with several resources.

**President Tidwell-** It looks like we may have some questions. That is correct, we may have a better perspective after a week or so of doing the online education. We have almost 2,000 students that live on campus. We are working right now to make sure that we refund any remaining balance on the student housing, student board, and parking as well. Those three areas are where we're working to refund it. We haven't told the whole campus because we're still working out some of the details. None of the details are set as of yet, but maybe Ona can give us a current report.

**Treasurer Rawashdeh-** I want to thank you all for the work that you're doing. I have some concerns, though, with the withdrawal. One of my classes is difficult online, but it's only offered once in the spring, so I can't withdraw without being a year behind. I don't have access to the computer lab that I need, I can't meet with my teammates, but I still have projects due. We're still on a business as usual course, but some things have changed.

**President Tidwell-** We definitely understand and we're sorry. Some courses are difficult to transition and maintain the same course. Our hope is that our faculty will continue to work with their students with a level of proficiency but also grace. Our hope is that they would also deliver on the learning objectives, that is our expectation. There are many things that have occurred, every faculty is going to address these challenges differently.

**Senator Williams-** I'm with the CEP. My professors are doing a great job with switching to online. It makes it very difficult, they do online Zoom hours, and we make it work. My question is about the pass/fail system. How will that affect GPA's and honors.

**Provost Mirmiran-** It would be an option, it would not be mandatory. This would be a chance for the student to decide whether it would work for them. Dr. Swain is working on a pro-con list from the perspective of the student. Depending on the program, you may or may not decide to take it. It would be neutral on affecting your GPA, it would neither raise or lower it. The plan is to make sure that it doesn't affect financial aid, etc. If you do fail, it would be the same as if you got an F in the course.

c. Associate Provost Colleen Swain

We always want to make sure that students make informed decisions. For your certification, for example, you have to show a C or better, so you would not want to do that. We're two days into the online education, but we're going to get better. There are some different strategies now that this is for the rest of the semester. If you need to take an incomplete, it does not mean that you have to wait until next spring. The faculty then works with the student and says when they think that they can get it done. I think it's important that you work with your faculty member but keep your advisor informed. Our goal is to make sure that everyone has the right information to make the best decision for them. Withdrawals are not our end goal. Our end goal is to make sure that you get the education you need. An incomplete would also not be about making you wait for a year. I sat in a Zoom meeting for two hours about how to handle different issues that they're having with online learning. It should be better next week for everyone.

**Senator Ramirez-** I'm trying to transfer in the fall and I'm going to need the grades in order to get into future courses.

**Provost Mirmiran-** Before you take that option, I would check with them to make sure that a pass/fail wouldn't affect the grade credit that the program is looking for.

**President Tidwell-** Talking to your Advisor is important, especially for you senator Ramirez.

d. VP-Student Success Ona Tolliver

One of the things that we wanted to do was to improve the safety of our students. We extended spring break and it has become clear to us that the best way to not spread it would be to limit our contact with each other within close distances. The decision was made to send students home that are able to go home. We are aware that some students would need to remain here for many reasons, we are working with the Dean of Students and Dr. Swain to try

and address any reasons that a student may feel that they need to stay. Dr. Laird is working to find a resolution to refunds for campus housing and the meal plan. Not every student is the same and we have to make sure that we are appropriately reimbursing students. Just be aware that we are working diligently to make the process of moving out easy and make sure that students receive their refunds where applicable.

**Senator Roberts-** I've been told by UPines that we're still going to have to pay the next two months' rent or pay the early termination fee.

**VP Tolliver-** We operate under the same umbrella, but they are a separate entity. Many of the residents there go through a process like a normal apartment complex. In this process, we are working with Dr. Laird for University Pines to create a resolution that will prevent that burden on our students. We're going to make sure that we're making the right decision for our students and our partnership.

**Senator Brooks-** I'm one of the students that would need to stay here. Is there a time limit on when students will find out on whether we will be able to stay.

e. Dean of Students Andrew Pettee

We are in the process now of reviewing the requests. A lot of times, we'll probably reach out to you soon to get some more information. You should receive an email and we may schedule a phone call. Being on campus is an awesome experience and if living on campus is the option that's best for you, we want to look at that and make sure that we're partnering with you for your success. I've talked to lots of students about the challenges and issues that we face and that students face. I'd be happy to talk with you at any time.

**Senator Astbury-** So far, my classes have been pretty good. Most students have been understanding about the classes, but pretty much the only question that I've gotten has been about the refunds, so I'm glad to hear that y'all are working on that. Is there a chance that a refund will NOT happen, or will we for sure get refunds?

**President Tidwell-** Yes, there will be a refund, depending on how the student was funded. If a student paid out of pocket, the student would get the full pro-rated refund. If a student, however, was on full scholarship, that student would not be entitled to a refund. If they paid the parking, they would get refunded the prorated parking fee. We have to make sure that we are ethically and legally appropriating those funds, especially with scholarships, grants, etc. The short answer is yes. If the student paid for those things, they will be eligible for a refund.

**Senator Forster-** I used to work at the Cowan Center, but they said we wouldn't be able to work anymore. They said I'd be put on an email list for students looking for other jobs on campus and continue getting paid.

**President Tidwell-** Some departments have provided their students with opportunities to work from home, but we'll give you an opportunity to do so. Send me an email at [mtidwell@uttyler.edu](mailto:mtidwell@uttyler.edu). We're going to do our best to place every student, to the best of our ability. Workstudy students will continue to be paid. Our preference would be that you continue to work, but if you absolutely cannot, we may still be able to pay you. If you're just simply a student worker, that does not apply to you, but we are still trying to find you other work opportunities. I'll get you connected with HR, and they'll see if they can get you placed.

**Senator Forster-** I'm hoping that students that are not workstudy would be prioritized for jobs, since they can't be paid unless they work.

**President Tidwell-** There are lots of different factors, skill sets, etc.

**Senator Barakat-** I had a quick question. Just to clarify, is there a process that I need to do? Do I need to go to HR and see what the plan is?

**President Tidwell-** Let me verify. The website says to call Human Resources and they'll make sure that you have the opportunity to work. We'll make sure that you all get another email about that as well, to the student body.

**Treasurer Rawashdeh-** I have a question regarding the prorated refund. Is that going to include the fees, like recreational fee, computer access fee, etc?

**President Tidwell-** We have looked closely at that and talked to the University of Texas system. We want to make sure that we are fully aligned. We decided that those three things

would be refunded because they are essentially universal on all of the campuses. Many of those fees fund departments and they have been pre-funded. It would cause the campus a great deal of harm and have those refunded while those staff members are still working here.

**President Menhennett-** How do you all think that we should move forward regarding the proposed additional fees?

**President Tidwell-** Our recommendation is that we hold off on the referendum for that. Given many of the questions that y'all have had and the uncertainty right now, I don't feel good about having y'all put forward a referendum for an upward adjustment. We've had many discussions about it and we strongly recommend that we wait at least a year.

**VP Tolliver-** One of the conversations that we've had is the timing of the referendum versus when the fee is put in place. It is something that SGA may want to entertain for the fall 2020 or spring 2021 election cycles. That will be a discussion that we would need to have about the preparedness of our student body to discuss it.

**Par. Ray-** It might also be worth having the people who are asking for the funds come back to speak with us.

**Dean Pettee-** Students are able to stay until their request has been approved or denied. Until the final decision has been made, students may remain in the residence halls.

**Par Ray-** I'm glad to hear that because that's something that we were worried about previously. Another thing I was wondering about is projects that are hands-on.

**Dr. Swain-** We are discussing that to create a solution.

**President Menhennett-** Can you hit on the issues of county closures?

**Dean Pettee-** Contact me offline, [apettee@uttyler.edu](mailto:apettee@uttyler.edu) so that we can work out the best course of action for each student individually.

**President Menhennett-** Any other senators have questions?

**Parliamentarian Ray-** There are prerequisite tests that have been cancelled. Are there plans being created for those situations?

**Provost Mirmiran-** We are trying to make sure that there is no impact on the progression. Every department is charged with maintaining the progression to completion. Music, art, engineering, etc. may have more difficulty, but they'll all working on that. We are also going to be looking at considering the conversion of spring courses and increase our offering in fall or summer to make up for that and maintain your progress.

**Treasurer Rawashdeh-** I want to thank you for your understanding and that you care. What additional resources can we provide students so that they still have the tools to make sure that you're still successful? For example, what resources do we have for students that need help in classes and don't have access to tutors or professors?

**Dr. Swain-** There is a list of resources on Canvas 101, one of which is Upswing that is a 24/7 tutoring service. Each department is trying to recruit students to tutor so that there is an increase in student tutors. Only three days in, not all of the details are worked out yet. Upswing is for everything, not just those primary classes.

**President Menhennett-** I think that we've covered a lot and these people are so dedicated. I have to give my praise to them for everything that they do for the students.

**President Tidwell-** I did see one question about commencement. We have postponed it to September 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, and they will occur in the Cowan Center. Do expect that there will be more details coming up. Our administration thanks you for helping us reach the students and address their issues and concerns.

## VI. Officer Reports

### a. President Menhennett

One benefit of the moving of the spring commencement is that it will be nicely timed for our summer graduates. We are in the midst of planning everything. It was awesome to have esteemed people here and for everyone to be so courteous. I'm finishing up stuff for UTSAAC. As far as going to Austin, we're not sure, probably just by voice. I'm going to continue doing Zoom meetings to make sure that you guys stay up to date on everything.

### b. Vice-President Cooper

I hope that y'all are staying safe and healthy. At the university, the search committee has come to a close; Camry Tharp was chosen as the new assistant director. She will oversee Leadership and Service and a ton of other things. I'm working from home. All of our events have been cancelled, but we're working on virtual ways to host our events so that we can stay engaged and happy. Another thing is that the Dean of Students' Office is working on finals weeks bags. Usually, we'd pass them out, but the Dean of Students came up with idea to send them out by mail so that students can get them. Most likely, students will sign up via email if they want to receive them and provide their address.

c. Secretary Jennings

\*talked\*

d. Treasurer Rawashdeh

I want to thank everyone for participating. We all have the same concerns, so I'm proud of y'all. I've been working on reviewing our SGAC guidelines so that we can update them. I've been updating the budget, or trying to at least. I want to determine how much funds are left and what they can be used for. My job is to interact with students and give them funds, so that's challenging right now. We're still trying to navigate the area. I'm also researching other institutions and their SGA funds policies. I'm also considering a short tutorial video.

e. Parliamentarian Ray

Our E Board has been working hard all these past two weeks. We have two people in the group, are they senators? Ok, no they are not. I've worked diligently on our rules. Online, the rules kind of change, so we are working on writing all of that out. I've been making massive improvements, just editing to make sure that the rules work out when you read them.

Hopefully, we should get those passed. Make sure that you vote to approve them. The first thing that I'll want to do is update them and approve some even newer ones. I will probably present them and get y'all's input on changes.

## VII. Committee Reports

a. I think it would be good for us to work on it as much as we can now that we can meet at the snap of a finger. Now instead of having to walk in between classes, we can meet via Zoom and talk about our needs each week. Take advantage of learning something new and growing together.

## VIII. Student Voice Reports

a. **President Menhennett-** There are some points here for you guys to consider if you aren't sure what to talk about. We want our senators to continue speaking to students and getting to know what the issues and concerns are. On campus, we don't talk as much as we do when we're online. We're not trying to jump on y'all, but we want to maintain that pressure.

b. **Senator Ramirez-** I'm kind of planning on going back to Tyler every now and then to check on residents. There's been a fear of getting kicked out, but I've been trying to update students about their options for staying here if they need to. It's been better than I thought regarding communication. Labs are really difficult to navigate right now.

c. **President Menhennett-** I know a lot of people are worried about those things, even just if they don't know if they'll be able to focus at home.

d. **Senator Williams-** A lot of education majors are very stressed because all of the testing centers are closed. Students can't take certification tests, GREs, etc. I'm very lucky that I've already taken the test I need, but some haven't. As far as housing, students have been upset that they were just assigned a day to move out, no matter of their circumstances.

e. **Senator Brooks-** I had my first Zoom meeting. I'm lucky because a lot of of Nursing's stuff is made to be online. Patho has been moved, and it's mostly okay. To get into your nursing program, you have to get your CPR certification, and right now students can't do that, which is difficult. They've talked about moving that deadline. For housing, most people won't mind as long as you communicate with your roommates and minimize exposure.

f. **Senator Astbury-** I'm pretty sure that I've brought up everything else that I had.

g. **President Menhennett-** One of the questions that I have listed is how are each of the different departments kinds of responding to these issues?

- h. Senator Reid-** If you have tips on reaching out remotely, please share. The only people I've been able to talk to our Honors students. There really isn't much to talk about with sustainability, so we may look at doing something to help another group in that space instead. We're going to look at what we can do remotely to help international students, etc. We want to make sure that all students know they are cared for.
- i. Treasurer Rawashdeh-** You can do two things: You can get with Ms. Cynthia Martinez (the director for international students). If you go to your class and click on People on Canvas, you can get in touch with the people in your classes. If your concern is international students, try and reach out to Cynthia Martinez.
- j. Senator Roberts-** How UPines is responding... Everything has been hectic and RHA has been fully halted. We're looking at bringing that back about 3 weeks from now. I work with housing constituents, so it's been difficult, but I might look into reaching out to students via Canvas.
- k. Parliamentarian Ray-** So you're a senator of SGA and also in RHA?
- l. Senator Roberts-** All senators are supposed to be senators, but it's just me and Mineko for now.
- m. Advisor Neaves-** That takes effect in the fall, but we've tried our best to fill seats with RHA students so that it will be a more seamless transition. The intention would be that our new senators would represent the RHA and the residents in that facility.
- n. President Menhennett-** Anything to add, Senator Roberts?
- o. Senator Roberts-** I'm going to see what the other housing facilities are doing so that we can act accordingly.
- p. President Menhennett-** That's awesome. Thank you, sir.
- q. Senator Rodriguez-** The Soules Ambassadors are working on having a meeting next week to discuss recruitment, etc. I need to get in touch with FMA to see if we're going to resume meeting or if we're done. In the Soules Ambassadors, we're going to be meeting about our change in leadership and things like that.
- r. Senator Forster-** I was pretty fortunate in terms of classes because most of my professors have decided not to do zoom meetings. One professor is recording lectures and most of the others have not changed much. I'm also on a racing team for the engineering department. It was down to 6 people in a lab for physical projects, and now it's down to 2 people per team per room (so 4 people). What I've heard from the deans is that they'll look at your projects and grade them themselves and they were previously graded on a pass/fail basis at contests that we won't be able to attend this semester. Other than that, that's pretty much it from me.
- s. Parliamentarian Ray-** Do you have an internship?
- t. Senator Forster-** I had one in the works, but they probably won't be hiring anyone now. I had some friends that were supposed to go to Delek, and now they were told not to come and they were terminated because of this.
- u. Parliamentarian Ray-** One tough thing about that is that it's part of their grade at the University, even though they can't control it.
- v. Senator Stavinoha-** All of the psychology students that I've talked to are doing great. Our professors are good with Zoom and recorded lectures. We don't have the same certification tests and stuff, so that isn't a big deal. Since we don't have any fine arts students in the College of Arts and Sciences, all of their classes have moved over to a research paper. The two departments that I'm aware of are both doing really great.
- w. Senator Barakat-** Not much has gone on. I've talked to some of my fellow students via Canvas. A lot of them says that the Zoom things and lectures are working fine. Some like it better because they have a chance of getting a better grade. Most of the freshmen really enjoy it. That's it.
- x. Senator Long-** The psych department has been doing a good job of communicating and adjusting, even with the Honors program. There were a lot of setbacks with research conferences and things, but they've been really understanding. Katie has been hosting weekly meetings, which I think has been great. I've been able to reach out to the most students

through housing. There are a lot of concerns about housing; no one is going to tell you no if you move out earlier or later. It's really just intended to be a communication among roommates to make sure that y'all aren't crossing paths. A lot of residents have been stressed. A nursing student I talked to was not having a good time. It seems like everybody is adjusting well for the most part.

- y. **Senator Bauder-** One thing that I was going to suggest was self-policing the muting.
- z. **Parliamentarian Ray-** I agree, but the concern is with other students.
- aa. **Senator Bauder-** I haven't heard a lot from my professors. Hopefully it gets better. Some people have been concerned about commencement, so I'm glad that it's still going to happen. As far as UPines, I know that they're still working on it and reducing their cancellation fee. Before all of this, I was working on mobile ID cards with Blackboard Transact. Our system supports it but the University would have to get the addition. Overall, I think not having to physically have your card on you would be nice.

## IX. Old Business

- a. I originally had the fee changes on here, but we're going to have to reevaluate based on the current situation and the recommendations of the Administration.
- b. Treasurer Rawashdeh- I think we should definitely do a formal announcement. I find it disappointing that we had an important meeting and not many students are here. I am in agreement that we should give out an announcement that clarifies for students.
- c. Advisor Neaves- Stop sharing your screen and I entertain a motion to table all proposed referendums to Fall 2020.
- d. Treasurer Rawashdeh- carried the motion. Seconded by Senator Reid.
- e. The motion passed. We will notify students that we have tabled those referendums.

## X. New Business

- a. **Parliamentarian Ray-** Should we reach out to the people that requested those funds so that they know before we inform the whole student body?
- b. **President Menhennett-** So based on the thoughts of the administration and the student body, we will postpone the vote until next semester. I'll get in contact with those people and work on getting that out, and make sure that it is optimized for next semester.
- c. **Advisor Neaves-** A couple things: I think that this was a good run. It's a good opportunity for y'all to get the experience of distance senators. This is the exact experience that they face every week. Hopefully, when we return to normal, we will be better in communicating with our distance campuses. This is only day 3, so hopefully by next week, we'll have a better idea of how students feel. Cabinet does care and every day is different. We're working with the county and the leadership at UT Tyler had done a good job of staying ahead of this and making sure that our students are safe. Overcommunicate. If you have an issue with the time you're supposed to move out, please just let them know that it doesn't work for you so that they can reevaluate for your safety and the safety of their staff.
- d. We're going to roll over our officer ballot to the senator election. We're not going to set up the ballot for senators just yet, because the constitution will be voted on tonight. After that, we'll set up the senator ballot application and candidacy meetings start next week. They'll all be zoom meetings. If none of the times work, I'll schedule a one-on-one meeting with you to make it happen. Per the constitution, if you don't talk to me before the last meeting, I'm not allowed to host one after that. Next week, maybe we can discuss some ideas on how to get the word out about those who are going to be running for a position. Last but not least, Student Engagement is not stopping. We've had three Kahoots. If you place, we will mail you a prize. Our office has done a great job of engaging with students. Extroverts need an opportunity to continue talking and connecting with each other, so we're really trying to get creative just to keep y'all engaged. These four to five weeks are going to be stressful, so this will be a good way to get away and relax for a little bit. The ID thing would cost a lot of money because all of the doors would have to change. That would also greatly impact our student engagement process, either because we'd have to go back to writing down numbers or investing in the electronic system.

- e. President Menhennett- Are we allowed to appoint people at this point of the meeting? What position are you wanting to go for?
- f. JT Foote- I'd like to be in the Soules College of Business. I'm a junior IT major with a music minor. I'm an RA at Liberty Landing. One of the main reasons that I want to be a senator is that there isn't currently someone appointed for the College of Business and I want to do that and help out in any way that I can.
- g. President Menhennett- Just to let you know, we have two college of business senators but there is one spot still available. I'd like to open up the floor to anyone who has questions.
- h. Treasurer Rawashdeh- Hi JT, I'm the treasurer for SGA. My previous question was this open position. What year are you?
- i. JT- I am a junior, but I may not graduate next year depending on scheduling.
- j. Treasurer Rawashdeh- I imagine that you've spoken to the faculty and staff, and how is your relationship with them?
- k. JT- I've had a less of reason or chance to meet with some of the staff, but that's something that I'd like to build. All of the faculty that I've been in classes with, I have good relationships with.
- l. Treasurer Rawashdeh- Do you know our current senators?
- m. JT- I've met them briefly, but not really.
- n. Treasurer Rawashdeh- Why are you wanting to become a senator for the College of Business?
- o. JT- I really want to get connected with the College of Business students and build those relationships since I'll be there a lot more this coming year.
- p. Parliamentarian Ray- Just some procedure stuff: What is your real name?
- q. JT- John Foote
- r. Parliamentarian Ray- Someone will let you know when you can come back in to the meeting.
- s. **Senator Williams-** JT's my RA. He talks to people, he's really nice, and he has lots of connections.
- t. **Senator Bauder-** I've known JT through residence life, he always goes above and beyond to reach out to people and make sure that everyone is doing well.
- u. **Treasurer Rawashdeh-** I don't know if you guys noticed, but I kind of grilling him. As you guys noticed, he's mainly an RA. Maybe, he could be a residence life senator, connecting to students in his area. He doesn't know our current senators and, when I became a COB senator, I knew the current ones.
- v. **Senator Bauder-** I just wanted to point out that current RA's can't represent housing in SGA.
- w. **Senator Long-** With the new process, RA's are going to be put in a potluck and assigned wherever they're called. JT's very dedicated. He goes out of his way to make it go above and beyond. He's just genuinely a good guy that wants to hear what people have to say and really loves solving problems for people. So, that's about it.
- x. **Senator Reid-** Motion to vote of JT for a senator for SCOB. Seconded by Sen. Bauder.
- y. **Motion passed to bring JT in as an SCOB senator**
- z. President Menhennett reads the oath for JT Foote
- aa. Senator Williams- My sister is in medical school and just matched with Baylor OB-GYN. Thank you to everyone that prayed for her, etc.

## XI. Adjournment

**Motion to adjourn by Parliamentarian Ray and seconded by Senator Roberts.**