

Minutes | September 11, 2020 | General Meeting of the Kent State University Graduate Student Senate

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
 - A. Absent: Applied Engineering, Sustainability & Technology, Communication & Information, Computer Sciences, Digital Science, History, Mathematics, Music, and Nursing
- III. Approval of minutes from July 10, 2020
 - A. **Motion:** Psychological Sciences, second from Biomedical Sciences.
- IV. Dr. Taléa Drummer-Ferrell, Dean of Students (tdrumme1@kent.edu)
 - A. Welcome and Introduction
 1. Dr. Drummer-Ferrell has been at Kent in a variety of capacities (including being a full-time PhD student, working in Athletics and Upward Bound, and serving as the Director of the Multicultural Student Center) since 2009. She has been serving as a Dean of Students for almost a year.
 - B. Division reorganization
 1. Dr. Drummer-Ferrell's pillar and focus is on advocacy, support, and well-being. This includes working with SRVSS, the Office of Student Conduct, Psychological Services, Recreational and Wellness Services, and supporting student needs overall. You can read more on the [Dean of Students website](#).
 - C. COVID response team reminder
 1. Call 330-672-2525 if you have any questions or are feeling any symptoms. Also check the [Coronavirus dashboard](#), which gets updated every Monday.
 - D. Student needs
 1. Dr. Drummer-Ferrell serves as an advocate for students, including students in crisis. She strives to be a resource for all students and if she cannot help, she will connect students in the right direction.
 2. Dr. Drummer-Ferrell is working with Psychological Services on the Mental Health fee structure and is hoping to have good news about additional access to services and removing barriers for students.
 3. Kent State of Wellness also has a lot of great resources. You can find them [here](#).
 4. The Student Emergency Grant Fund is still open. Find information [here](#) and apply for the grant on Flashline.
 - a. There is a significant waitlist for the grant, so she encourages students to see if their department has any funds available.
 - E. In collaboration with Campus Kitchen, the Dean's office is running a Satellite food pantry every Friday from 12-3pm. You can find more information on the [Campus Kitchen website](#).
 - F. Questions from Senators:

1. *Political Sciences*: Do student groups have to ask for permission to meet?
 - a. *Dr. Drummer-Ferrell*: There is a guidance for the university and for the city of Kent that groups of 10 or more people should not meet in person. We are not recommending any gatherings of more than 10 people. Protests are allowed, as this is an opportunity for you to exercise your First Amendment rights. If you are meeting with less than 10 people and are abiding by social distancing guidelines and wearing masks you can meet in person. You do not need to ask permission from the university. Kent State also does not have any jurisdiction over the city.
2. *Architecture*: Can international students access the emergency grant funding?
 - a. *Dr. Drummer-Ferrell*: Part of the emergency fund was funded by the CARES funding that the university received from the federal government, which is money that international students were not able to apply to. However, there are multiple funding sources for the emergency grant and we are now using privately fundraised funds. Those funds do not have the same restrictions and international students can apply. International students should also consider connecting with the [Office of Global Education](#) about funding options.

V. Executive Board Reports

A. **Executive Chair** – Claire Jackman – cjackma2@kent.edu

1. July Faculty Senate Meeting updates:
 - a. Kent State's enrollment numbers are pretty good. There is about a 6% decline in enrollment across Kent campuses, but there is less of a decline at the Kent campus.
 - b. The Freshman retention rate was around 82%.
 - c. We saw an increase in the number of Graduate students attending Orientation, but the most current Graduate student enrollment numbers were not shared.
 - d. Recent implementation of offering in-state tuition for out-of-state graduate students who got their Bachelors at an Ohio school has been going well. A lot of people have taken advantage of this program.
 - e. The CARES act helped Kent State avoid a 3 million dollar deficit. Some of the remaining money will help with the deficit expected this upcoming academic year. As a result, colleges and departments were able to only cut their budgets by 10%, instead of the originally expected 20%. Administrative offices are still expected to reduce their budget by 20%.
 - f. About 300 people, 50 of whom are faculty, took the voluntary separation.
 - g. COVID:
 - i. There is some concern about neighboring counties having

- higher risk levels (Summit county is at a Level 3 now).
- ii. We had 33 new positive cases last week and have had 57 positive cases on campus since July 7th.
 - h. Next Faculty Senate Meeting is Monday 9/14. They will be discussing the pass/fail protocol from this past spring and also for this fall.
 - i. The Chair of the Faculty Senate, alongside the USG president and Claire have been talking about writing a statement to present to the administration regarding the recent hate speech written on the rock and racial issues beyond the rock. This would include asking the administration to take a look at possibly outdated policies or policies that are unintentionally discriminatory. They will ask for more objective statements about what Kent's core beliefs are and how they plan to protect and respect KSU students. This will also include examining how that can be factored into the university's code of conduct for students, but also for faculty and staff.
 - j. Questions:
 - i. *Geography*: Wanted to report that some of our graduate students face racism on campus and multiple people shouted slurs at them.
 - ii. *Claire*: If anybody has had similar experiences or has things to share, please let us know or email me at cjackma2@kent.edu.
2. Answer to the EPC question from last meeting regarding summer registration for Thesis and Dissertation defenses: "Students who are planning to defend their thesis in summer or early fall, or who are requiring access to university resources during the summer months — including, but not limited to, feedback or mentoring from their thesis advisors, use of university buildings and other research resources — must register for thesis in the summer term. Students who are planning to defend their thesis in summer or early fall, or who are requiring access to university resources during the summer months — including, but not limited to, feedback or mentoring from their thesis advisors, use of university buildings and other research resources — must register for thesis credits in the summer term." This was approved on May 11 and put in effect August 27, 2020 and can be found in the University Catalog.
 3. Gradfest will be held Friday, Sept. 11 from 6-8pm. The Gradfest poster has a link to the Qualtrics sign up. Sign up with your Kent email address in order to get the Teams link sent to you before Grad Fest begins. Join us for virtual trivia while you enjoy drinks and snacks at home! Make sure you send the poster to your constituents when you receive it to give them ample time to sign up.
 4. Substitution for senate meeting breakfast.
 - a. Breakfast or lunch were originally provided when Senate meetings occurred during times where people would normally eat. We have had long conversations with Kyle, our advisor, and Barb, who handles our finances, about what our options are and to make

- sure that we are in compliance with university regulations when it comes to how we are spending our money.
- b. We are unable to use student fee funds to provide compensation to individual senators. When we are able to be back in person once more, we will be reinstating refreshments at meetings.
 - c. While we understand this is likely not the answer you were looking for, we want to emphasize how much time we spent discussing different options.
 - d. Questions:
 - i. *Anthropology*: How will the money used for the breakfast be reappropriated?
 - ii. *Claire*: Our budget has changed significantly and so it is hard to say which part of the budget is going where. However, we have created a new Book Award that will hopefully be a good new option for students and this money will most likely be put towards awards.
 - iii. *Biological Sciences*: Can you briefly explain why senators can not be compensated individually?
 - iv. *Claire*: Student fee money cannot be used to directly compensate individual students. We considered purchasing gift cards for Senators, but that was also not possible.
 - v. *Kyle*: We have not run into those same issues with awards, as it is more of a scholarship structure. We only have a limited percentage of funding that can be allocated for leadership stipends within a student organization and the GSS Executive Board funding actually comes from a different funding model. Since so much of our budget comes from student fees, we are not able to use it to compensate individual students.

B. Executive Vice Chair – Jordyn Stoll – jstoll7@kent.edu

1. Thank you to everyone who has contacted me regarding serving as a committee representative this semester. All committees currently have a primary representative, and only a few need secondary representatives. If you are interested in serving as a secondary representative, please visit the [GSS committee website](#) to learn more. The website also contains the link to the committee report form, which should be filled out after each committee meeting by the representative who was present.
 - a. **Mental Health committee report (Noel-Marie Plonski nplonsk2@kent.edu)** : We have been having a weekly graduate student support group all summer and plan to continue through the upcoming year. We want to make sure every graduate student at Kent knows that they can attend, even if it is just once. We are currently trying to pick a time for the fall semester to have weekly support group meetings virtually. We are also getting ready to

send out a survey to all graduate students about their mental health status and what they would want from us and Kent to help their mental health and self-care. We are also planning on having another meeting this month to discuss our plans for fall semester

- b. **Student Accessibility Services committee report (Caroline Toth ctoth14@kent.edu)** : *Great Place Initiative (GPI) update-* Mandy and Dana have shifted into new roles and that has precipitated how we can institutionalize this work and implement into structures we already have, like this Committee (will be creating small groups based on projects made up of committee members. Current projects- training, identifying single-use restrooms and quiet spaces on campus). *Kent State of Accessibility Update-* Decided to postpone and revisit in Spring 2021. Still working to create Beyond Compliance events-putting together weekly virtual programming in October (disAbility Awareness Month). Two working sessions will be planned in September and those who wish to join these sessions are encouraged to contact Ben (contact Caroline if you are interested). *Facilities updates-* Applying for a grant for electric charging stations for vehicles. EPA requires them to be accessible. Identify 6-8 locations on campus. *CTL trained over 1,000 faculty over the summer in "Ready to Rock Remote Teaching"*. Anyone interested in being part of the October videos on faculty, staff, and student experiences related to Student Accessibility Services and Disability Identity is encouraged to contact Amanda Feaster (contact Caroline if you are interested).
2. No ITA applications will be accepted this fall due to the university travel ban.
3. Money usually allocated to the fall ITA awards will instead be allocated to a [new Book award](#).
 - a. The book award is a non-competitive award that offers a flat rate of \$200, and will be given on a first come, first serve basis until allocated funds run out (~250 awards this fall).
 - b. The \$200 can be used for multiple books that support graduate student success (textbooks, research/professional development related, mental health related books).
 - c. The application requires all survey fields to be complete as well as a semester schedule and one page rationale explaining how the book(s) will benefit you as a graduate student.
 - d. The award money will be distributed up front after the award letter is signed and returned. Awardees are expected to complete a post-award survey two months after submitting their award letter.
 - e. Application and guidelines will be distributed to all senators soon, but can be found on the [GSS book award website](#).
 - f. Questions:
 - i. *Biological Sciences*: Do we not usually vote on things like

this and then it takes effect in the spring semester?

- ii. *Jordyn*: Yes, usually that is what we do. Due to COVID, the Executive Board is allowed to institute a new award if they deem it fit. We have decided to do this now, so that the funds can be allocated now and benefit graduate students, instead of just sitting in an account.
- iii. *Biomedical Sciences*: Have you considered shifting some of this money to fund more RAs or SCAs?
- iv. *Jordyn*: Yes, more funds have been allocated for these awards than in previous years. The SCA was not active last year, so no funds were allocated this past year. Maneesh will also get into this, but the DTA is usually where we spend a lot of money. Since we can only fund virtual conferences, there has been substantially less money used for this award than in other years.
- v. *Kyle*: I just want to add that we expect some of our programming expenses to be lower this year (in person programming is not happening, the symposium will be virtual, etc.) so some of those expenses have been routed to these awards as well.
- vi. *Biomedical Sciences*: Is the book award open now?
- vii. *Jordyn*: Yes. Please share this information with your constituents as you normally would.
- viii. *Biological Sciences*: You said it is a flat rate of \$200 - if someone wants a \$50 book, do they have to find more books?
- ix. *Jordyn*: It is a flat rate award and we were hoping this would allow students to purchase some more expensive books related to their classes, research, or professional development. If you only need one \$50 book, hopefully you can find other books that would benefit you! We do have an upfront payment system in place now, so you will receive the award upfront. You will then take a post award survey once you have used the money; there, you will submit a receipt of the books you purchased. You will submit this survey within 2 months of submitting your award letter, which will hopefully give everyone enough time to receive their money and purchase their books.
- x. *Political Sciences*: If I do not spend the full \$200 do I have to return the leftover money?
- xi. *Jordyn*: No. We hope and trust that people will use the awarded money for what it is intended.

- xii. *Physics*: Is there a recommendation letter required?
- xiii. *Jordyn*: No. You will fill out the application, submit your semester schedule, and a one page proposal stating how you will use the funding.
- xiv. *Biomedical Sciences*: Can this award be applied to books that students have already purchased?
- xv. *Jordyn*: Good question. Based on other awards, we are unfortunately not able to provide funding for previous purchases, but let me check with Kyle and Barb Spencer.
Answer: Unfortunately, we cannot provide funding for books that have already been purchased.

C. **Finance Chair** – Maneesh Shukla – mshukla@kent.edu

1. The Fall DTA is now available and the deadline is September 7, 2020.
 - a. We had 8 applications for the Summer DTA ranging from \$75 to \$300.
 - b. We have approximately 40 applications for the Fall DTA, ranging from \$30 to \$300. The average award is \$250.
 - c. We have substantially less applications due to our current situation. Usually, we have around 150 applications.
2. The Special Contingency Award is also available now and is offered on a rolling basis. This award is reviewed by the SCA review committee. We still have a few seats available for the review committee. **If you are interested in serving on this committee, please let Maneesh know.**
3. Proposed budget for fiscal year 2020 - 2021 - see Budget Presentation attached to the Minutes email.
4. Questions:
 - a. *English*: The award amount for the DTA used to be \$450 and now it is \$300. Where does that money usually come from and has that source been cut off?
 - b. *Maneesh*: We usually receive \$50,000 from Research and Sponsored Programs (GRASP), but we will not receive this money this year. GSS usually provided \$300 for the DTA and the additional \$450 were taken from that GRASP funding.
 - c. *English*: Does the DTA still provide a flat rate of \$300, even though travel and other costs are reduced in this virtual environment?
 - d. *Maneesh*: The DTA provides up to \$300 in funding, so the award will fund the registration fee and any other fee associated with attending a conference virtually. It is no longer a flat rate.
 - e. *Psychological Sciences*: I understand the university is undergoing

budget cuts, but do we have a graduate student who is advocating on our behalf to see why we are no longer receiving the \$50,000 from GRASP?

- f. *Kyle*: GRASP sent an email that due to budget cuts they did not expect to have the funding they usually give to GSS. I do not have a lot of detail, but we can talk about reaching out to them and advocating for some funding from that group. I am not sure how feasible it is with the current financial state, but we can definitely consider it.

D. Advocacy Chair – Anna Solberg – asolberg@kent.edu

1. The [Research Award Application](#) is now available. Anyone looking to apply for the Research Award must have their application submitted by October 12th by 11:59pm. Remember that we still cannot allow any travel funded through this award.
2. Anna is working on getting the award money to students who have been awarded an RA, but have not received their money yet.
3. If you cannot do your research anymore or if it has changed and you need to spend your money on different things, please reach out to Anna and let her know.
4. **Anyone willing to serve on the Research Award Review Committee, please contact Anna.**
5. Anna has been asked to serve on the University Anti-Racism Task Force as the representative for GSS. Please let Anna know if you have any concerns related to racism and hate on our campus, as she will represent our graduate students.

E. Research Symposium Chair – Payel Datta – pdatta1@kent.edu

1. The 2021 Research symposium is going to take place on 4/14/2021 and will be virtual. We will still have awards and there will be plenty of opportunities to present research and interact virtually.
2. The deadline for registration and abstract submission is 1/31/2021.
3. Payel showed the symposium HOT card, but it still needs to be edited to reflect the change to a virtual symposium.
4. Updated website and detailed information will be available hopefully by the beginning of October.
5. Question:
 - a. *Sociology*: If people received an RA last year and were supposed to present at least year's symposium, does that responsibility to present carry over to this year's symposium?
 - b. *Anna*: Yes, that would roll over. However, if individuals are not able to present that will be ok. It is recommended that they are there if they can be.

F. Info Services Chair – Maike Amann – gss.info@gmail.com

1. If you have published/presented recently, let us know. We'd like to spotlight you on social media.
2. Like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on Twitter ([@KSUGSS](#)).

V. Old Business

- A. N/A.

VI. New Business

- A. Motion to add Fashion into Bylaws as an Academic Unit.
1. **Motion:** Biomedical Sciences, second by English.
 2. Motion passes. Fashion will be added as an Academic Unit in the Graduate Student Senate Bylaws.
- B. The Senate decided to wait until next month's meeting to approve the budget.

VII. Announcements

- A. Coffee with the Dean program hosted by Dr. Manfred van Dulmen
1. More information, including a link to register for the September coffee hour, can be found in the Grad Chronicle that was sent out on Wednesday, 9/9/2020.

VIII. Thoughts/Concerns

- A. The new academic year has started and COVID-19 has caused us to make many changes across the university. If there are any important thoughts or concerns you want to share with the senate, please take this opportunity to share them.
- B. No thoughts/concerns were shared.

IX. Adjournment

- A. **Motion:** Anthropology, second from Psychological Sciences.
- B. Meeting adjourned at 12:38pm.