

Grand Valley State University Student Senate

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MINUTES

Thursday, January 15th, 2026

Kirkhof 2204, 5:15 PM

Chair: Evan Jackson

Vice Chair: Ty Vanlerberghe

Parliamentarian: William Laurin



Agenda

1. Call To Order

- a. Approval of the Minutes
 - i. The previous meeting's minutes stand approved.
- b. Passing of the Papers
 - i. No papers were passed at this time.

2. Public Comment

3. Executive Reports

- a. **President - Evan Jackson**
 - i. Good afternoon, everyone.
 - 1. I want to start by welcoming everyone back. I hope you were able to get some rest over winter break and come back ready for the semester ahead.
 - 2. Before I go further, I also want to acknowledge that we have a number of students joining us today who are here to interview for Student Senate. We're glad you're here and appreciate your interest in serving. Student Senate takes its work seriously, and we value students who are willing to commit their time and energy to representing their peers. Thank you for being here with us today.
 - 3. Coming back from break is always a transition, but I want to be clear about something from the outset: this semester matters. Much of the work we take on from this point forward has real momentum and real implications for students and for the university. What we do this semester is not just planning—it's execution.

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4. Last semester, we spent a lot of time laying groundwork. This semester is about following through. It's about turning ideas, conversations, and commitments into outcomes.
5. With that comes expectations.
6. Moving forward, I expect us to operate with consistency and professionalism. That means being prepared, being present, and being engaged—not just attending meetings, but actively contributing to the work. Every senator here plays a role in the credibility and effectiveness of this body, and participation is not passive.
7. You'll also see that the calendar for this semester is full, and that is intentional. There are important meetings, events, and deadlines. I expect everyone to review the calendar carefully and plan ahead, especially around required commitments. If you anticipate conflicts or concerns, communicate them early so they can be addressed responsibly.
8. This semester, we will be focusing on a few core priorities: strengthening how we communicate and collaborate with campus partners, ensuring student voices are meaningfully represented in ongoing university conversations, and delivering work that is thoughtful, timely, and worth standing behind. You'll hear more details as the semester progresses, but the expectation is clear—this is a working semester.
9. I also want to emphasize that leadership does not sit in one position or at one podium. Every senator here carries responsibility—to take ownership of the work they commit to, to speak up when

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something can be improved, and to hold themselves and each other to a high standard.

10. If at any point you feel unclear about expectations or unsure how to engage more fully, I encourage you to reach out early.
11. As we move into this semester, my goal is simple: that when we look back at the end of winter, we can say that this body was focused, intentional, and effective—and that students could feel the impact of our work.
12. Thank you all for being here and for the commitment you bring to Student Senate. I'm looking forward to what we'll accomplish together.
13. I now yield to Vice President Vanlerberghe

b. **Vice President - Ty Vanlerberghe**

- i. Welcome back!! Happy Thursday, everyone! I hope you all were able to enjoy your break and that your new year and new semester are off to a great start. A couple updates for you today.

1. First, I have some very exciting news! Yesterday, Vice President for Student Affairs Jenny Hall-Jones let me know that a contract has officially been signed with a law firm to provide free legal services to GVSU students, as a direct result of our past student legal services legislation. This is a huge win for both Student Senate and the student body as a whole, and serves as a huge reminder of the importance of the work we do each and every day. I will be providing more updates throughout this semester, as Student Senate will be working hard to promote this project to students before its anticipated April launch.

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2. Second, today we will quickly review our legislative process once again to brush up on our knowledge, and will also be reviewing our first piece of legislation for term, our Reach Higher Together and Academic Affairs Strategic Framework endorsement resolution. Both of these agenda items are to encourage you all to make your ideas into a reality and pursue passing legislation this semester. We only have seven more GA's left for this semester, so get after it and shoot big.
3. Third, as we enter winter semester, we draw closer to our annual spring elections as well as Cabinet elections. If you are interested at all in pursuing leadership for next year, please set up meetings with your Chair, the person in that position, Evan, and myself. We want to make sure the next generation of Student Senate leadership is as prepared as possible, and must be in the know to do so.
4. Fourth, as many of you may have noticed today, you all should have received an email from Deb Rambandt from the Laker Food Co. Office. The email included details on a follow-up meeting for our conversation with Laker Food Co. earlier in November. This is a key opportunity to let your opinions and additional questions be known. The meeting will take place Tuesday, January 27th from 5-6 PM in Kirkhof Center. Please respond to Deb's email to RSVP.
5. Finally, and most excitingly, we have applicants joining us in the public gallery today. If you are an applicant, please meet Genna Wright after the meeting. She and other Cabinet members will guide you down to our office space and then Evan, Will, and I will

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interview everyone one-by-one while the rest of you await being called in. We thank you for your patience in-advance.

6. If anyone has any questions, please reach out to me on Slack. And with that I will yield to Chief of Staff Laurin.

c. Chief of Staff - William Laurin

- i. Good evening everyone, I can't believe it's been a whole year since I have seen you guys! I hope we are all doing well and are ready to get back swinging into things! I have just a couple updates for you all today.

1. Firstly, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement he led, the university is holding an MLK Jr. Day of Service event on Saturday, January 24th at 8:00 AM. The plan is for student groups to split up across the West Michigan area to volunteer at local non-profit and humanitarian organizations to learn more about community service and impacts in local areas. This will count as an event requirement for those who attend, and transportation will be provided by both the school and members of the senate. President Jackson has already posted the link to the RSVP in the general business channel in slack, but I will post it again momentarily.

2. In other news, we are fast approaching the time for elections and cabinet appointments. If you have any questions or interest in serving for one of our cabinet positions, Chief of Staff included, do not wait to reach out to the respective chair of the position you are interested in.
 3. My final announcement, I will be chairing the elections commission for the 2026-27 Student Senate tenure. This is the

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committee responsible for collecting and verifying elections materials such as petitions, candidate campaigns, and generally ensuring that candidates are following the guidelines outlined in our elections packets. If you do not plan on returning next year and are interested in serving, please reach out to me before this Sunday.

4. That's all from me, I yield back to President Jackson.

4. RHT and AASF Resolution Review

- i. Vice President Vanlerberghe presented the Reach Higher and Academic Affairs Strategic Framework Resolution to the Senate, and opened the floor to questions.
 1. Hartley: I believe this is well worded. It really encapsulates that we have thought about this at length and it presents itself in that way.
 2. Hardgrave: The only term I'm not understanding is "Learning Ecosystem".
 - a. Lancaster: "Learning Ecosystem" is the academy, and the university. All of the learning in student affairs that directly impacts students, including how faculty converses with university administration. It shows how different departments work concurrently together.
 - b. Bélanger: It is the teaching but it is also the learning; trying to be holistic more than simply "teaching to learn". To encourage relations.
 3. Eapen: I would like to commend all of the work that has gone into this resolution and these frameworks as a whole. The amount of progress on RHT since just last year is amazing. I am looking

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forward to the University's vision for the future in innovating academic affairs and beyond.

5. Legislative Process Review

- a. A slideshow regarding the legislative process was presented to the Senate to provide additional information regarding future legislation proposals. This presentation included how to draft, present, and pass a bill, and what comes after.
 - i. Frikken: Regarding a bill my Dean would like to be passed, is there any way we could have them attend a meeting with Cabinet?
 1. Jackson: That would be encouraged.

6. Robert's Rules of Order Review

- a. A slideshow regarding Robert's Rules was presented to the Senate to provide additional information regarding etiquette in General Assembly meetings. This presentation included proper placard usage, correct language, and a refresher on the motion process.
 - i. McDonough: How do you retract a motion?
 1. Jackson: You would simply say "I retract my motion" or "I withdraw my motion."
 - ii. Finley: Can we make a point at any time or do we need to go through the speakers list?
 1. Jackson: At any point, feel free to interject. Points such as "Point of Order" are welcome when conversation becomes disorderly or unorganized, for example.

7. Call for Announcements

- a. Advisor Reports
 - i. Haight:
 1. Welcome back to campus!

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- a. Legislation—my door is always open. If you have any ideas for legislation, please come meet with me and I can help! You are the student voice, and you are capable of bridging the gap between faculty and students.
- b. I know the posting for the new AVP for housing will be opening soon, and this will impact first-year students in the future. Please engage with us and participate in opportunities to fine tune applicants.
- c. I would also like to caution you about sharing any information that could be miscommunicated amongst students. This results in rumors spreading, and that can have a negative impact on our Senate. It is going to be a wonderful semester.
- d. Go Lakers!

ii. Guzman:

- 1. Hello everyone. Just a few reminders.
 - a. Campus Life Night is coming up soon.
 - b. Please remember to check in on LakerWeekly to stay updated.
 - c. My daughter is also selling Girl Scout cookies if anyone is interested!

b. Chair Reports

i. Allocations - Lukas Hartley

- 1. Hi Senators! I hope you had a great winter break, and your new semester is off to a good start.

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- a. All I have to report tonight is that we are hearing one request tomorrow from Fillipinex for their Philippine Culture Night. If anyone who is not already on the committee is interested in serving on Allo that semester, please reach out to me ASAP.
- b. Thanks everybody!

- ii. Public Relations - Sophie Gemmen
 - 1. Welcome back, everyone! I hope you all managed to find some joy during this chaotic week! My committee and I are excited for this semester, so I'll start with a few updates on the PR side of things.
 - a. First, starting January 22nd, we will consistently have a spot in the Laker Weekly email newsletter, so be sure to check those out for resources and events around campus.
 - b. Second, Cabinet voted last semester to officially create a TikTok account to expand our reach across campus! This effort was spearheaded by Senator Frikken, and I know my committee is excited to tap into our approachability side. Watch out for opportunities to engage with posts and be part of their creation!
 - c. Lastly, if you have any interest at all in running for Chair of Public Relations at the end of this semester, please reach out to me!! I am more than happy to answer questions and talk through the role.
 - d. Thank you all, and have a lovely weekend.
- iii. Advocacy - Genna Wright

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1. Hi everyone! I am super excited to be back!
 - a. I don't have too much but today we discussed our goals and plans for the semester and if you haven't already please if you are available sign up for MLK day of service. I will send the link again over slack.
 - b. If anyone is interested they are looking for site leaders. Site Leaders are an important part of MLK Day of Service as they lead participants through volunteer activities and reflection activities. They also serve as an important point of contact for our site supervisors and our office in the case of any issues or emergencies. It is a great opportunity to gain valuable leadership experience.

iv. Policy - Cera McDonough

1. Hi everyone! Welcome back, I am happy to see yall of you.
 - a. I don't have any updates at this current time. So I am wishing everyone a happy and safe semester. If you have any questions that are Policy related, please reach out to me.

v. Events - Karen Theakston

1. Happy National Bagel Day!
 - a. I will be having a meeting for Elect Her on Wednesday, the 21st for anyone who's interested!
 - b. Since this is my final semester at GV, I want to be proactive, so if you're interested in the Events Chair position, please let me know. I'd love to start meeting soon to talk more about the role.

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c. General Announcements

- i. Vanlerberghe: To reiterate, applicants will follow Chair Wright to the Senate office to begin interviews. Also, take some snacks from catering home with you!

8. Public Comment

- a. No public comment was made at this time.

9. Adjournment

- a. The meeting adjourned at 6:03 PM.