

Grand Valley State University Student Senate

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MINUTES

Thursday, March 19th, 2026

Kirkhof 2204, 5:15 PM

Chair: Evan Jackson

Vice Chair: Ty Vanlerberghe

Parliamentarian: William Laurin



Minutes

1. Call To Order

- a. Approval of the Minutes
 - i. Minutes from the previous meeting stand approved.
- b. Passing of the Papers
 - i. Chair Gemmen passed an interest form for Senate merchandise to members of the General Assembly.

2. Public Comment

- a. No comments were made at this time.

3. Executive Reports

- a. **President** - Evan Jackson
 - i. Good evening everyone, and welcome back.
 - ii. It is great to see you all. I hope you had a restful spring break and are ready to jump back into work. A few updates:
 - iii. Looking back, the State of the Student Body was a strong moment for this organization. It reflected the level of preparation, ownership, and execution that you all brought to the year.
 - iv. Similarly, the President's Ball was a great event, and it was good to see many of you there.
 - v. We received a response from Vice President Jenny Hall-Jones regarding the Reverse Vending Machine legislation. The proposal is seen as feasible, with continued work needed around our status as a cashless campus and State of Michigan return laws. Director Doug Wentworth has been identified as the administrative lead moving forward, and there is an emphasis on maintaining continuity as we transition leadership.

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- vi. Additionally, the University Technology Council shared an update on the digital ID legislation passed last year. The project is close to being pushed into production; however, funding was redirected to more immediate priorities. VP Milos Topicic will be working within the IT budget to identify alternative funding sources, and we should expect an update soon.
 - vii. As for today, we have two groups joining us. First, VP Donta Truss and the Admissions and Enrollment team will be sharing recent data and insights into enrollment strategy and the work being done across the university. Following that, we will be joined by our partners for Student Legal Services, Robert Alvarez Sr. and Robert Alvarez Jr. from Avanti Law. They will provide an overview of their work and this partnership moving forward. We will then be voting on the Student Life Budget. After that, I will be introducing a piece of legislation that I am very excited to share.
 - viii. Looking ahead, next week, we will be supporting Day of Giving. On Tuesday, we will be hosting a fundraising initiative similar to Pie a Senator. More details will be finalized at Cabinet tonight, so please join if you are interested in helping shape that.
 - ix. Additionally, Cabinet will be traveling to Washington, D.C. next week on behalf of the university. We are now past the halfway point of the semester.
 - x. I look forward to continuing to build momentum week after week and finishing the year strong.
- b. **Vice President** - Ty Vanlerberghe
- i. Hi, everyone! I hope you all had a fantastic, restful, and safe spring break! A couple quick updates for you all today.

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- ii. First, before we left for spring break, I represented the Student Senate at a meeting for the Reach Higher Integration Team—a university group dedicated to the implementation of Reach Higher Together, that we endorsed earlier in this semester. Here we did some initial mapping of main goals and potential KPI's to help measure success in implementation. I wanted to provide a quick update on this as I know many of you were interested in how the plans would actually look on campus. I will continue updates as we move forward.
 - iii. Second, yesterday, we alongside the Provost's Office held a quick workshop to collect grass-roots data from students in Kirkhof about barriers they have faced in their academic careers at Grand Valley. This was an incredibly successful event—with around 80 students participating and sharing their thoughts in just 2 hours. that the Provost's Office was really appreciative of. Huge shout out to Almas and Zazula.
 - iv. Third, This coming Monday (3/23) from 2-4PM in Kirkhof IT will be holding a town hall for faculty, staff, and students about GVSU's transition to Workday Student. This is a great opportunity to get a glimpse into what will be replacing Banner, and will count as an event requirement. Let me know if you would like to attend!
 - v. Fourth and finally, I have been receiving some questions about transitioning between our current Senate body and the new Senate body after election results are announced next Friday, March 27th. If you are not running in the election, your last GA will be next week, March 26th. If you are returning after the election, your first meeting of the new body will be Thursday April 2nd, and your last meeting will be Thursday,

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March 9th. If you plan on running for Cabinet, you will be nominated on the 2nd, and elections will take place on the 9th.

c. **Chief of Staff** - William Laurin

- i. Good afternoon everyone, It's great to see you all back here after our long hiatus. I have a few announcements today to get us back into the swing of things, starting with events requirements.
- ii. So far, very few people have submitted events, but I will be updating the events calendar with multiple more events for the last couple of weeks, in a few moments I will put that sheet in General Business. If any of you have events that you have completed but have not yet submitted, please reach out to me and we will get things sorted out.
- iii. Secondly, for our graduating seniors here on senate, if you are interested in a stole to wear while walking across stage, please reach out to me so we can get those distributed.
- iv. Thirdly, I want to encourage everyone, if you have not already done so, to get on the student senate website and vote! Tell your friends, classmates, club members or whoever you can to vote. While there may not be much time left, encouraging participation in these elections is a great way to involve students in the process that helps represent them.
- v. Lastly, I want to make an announcement that I will not be returning to Senate next year, meaning that the Chief of Staff position will be vacant and open to apply for. If you are interested in serving as Chief of Staff, please reach out to me and I would be happy to catch you up on the responsibilities of the position.

4. Admissions and Enrollment

- a. Donta Truss

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- i. Vice President for Enrollment and Development & College Futures, Donta Truss, alongside other representatives from the Admissions and Enrollment team, presented new data and insights into student admissions and enrollment at Grand Valley. After his presentation, Truss opened the floor to questions.
 1. Hardgrave: How is enrollment data looking for international students this year? Is it comparable to previous years?
 - a. Truss: We're moving well in our pursuit to build our international student community here at Grand Valley. We're making adjustments to ensure we continue to strive in that space, as well our geopolitical landscape continues to shift.
 2. Boujoulian: I was curious, in terms of our transfer student numbers declining. Is that because Michigan now has free community college?
 - a. Truss: I don't think that transfer student numbers are declining solely because of free community college. It is due to many hurdles, financial issues being one for example. Ultimately, we want to ensure student success for learners in Michigan, and we want them to graduate from Grand Valley.
 3. Taverne: I have heard scholarships and grants dwindle the further a student goes into their degree. What is Grand Valley doing to ensure students can afford a degree all the way through to graduation?

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- a. Truss: We never want to find ourselves in a situation where students are struggling to pay for college. I am going to yield to my colleague, Michelle Rhodes.
 - b. Rhodes: We do our very best to ensure students have grant and scholarship opportunities available for all four years. The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship is always trying to help and aid any student that needs financial help.
 4. Williams: What does Grand Valley or Michigan as a state do to incentivize high school students to graduate?
 - a. Truss: There are many factors that go into Michigan's graduation rate decreasing, including population fluctuations, as an example. Grand Valley is going into areas that we believe have been underserved in educational aspects. We try to ask the question on how we can get those persons to say, "I want to go to college". We do this through the Anchoring Pathway, which includes recruiting even starting as early as 8th grade. We ensure access to tutoring, literacy training, college visits, etc.
 5. Stokes: I had a question about the Taking our Backyard initiative. I think it's really important to build community around your communities. I was wondering what specific steps you took to make the initiative so successful?
 - a. Velez: We did visits to schools around neighboring counties, as well as invited them to visits here at Grand Valley. We also look at our centers, especially in larger cities where we have cities such as Detroit. We also take

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extra steps to market and target specific age groups of students to come.

6. Hardgrave: Is professor and instructor hiring numbers increasing as well as student numbers increase? Also, what is the median GPA after students have attended Grand Valley as they go through their degree?

a. Truss: That would be a Provost Drake question! She could address that much better than I. I do know that her team and office do their best to ensure amazing faculty. I unfortunately don't have the answer, besides sending you her team's way.

b. Batty: I believe the rough estimate is 2.99 GPA after the first two semesters.

7. McDonough: As a transfer student myself, I want to just say that I love it here at Grand Valley and I am so happy I am here!

5. Student Legal Services & Avanti Law

a. Robert Anthony Alvarez & Melissa Baker-Boosamra & Renee Malkowski

i. Avanti Law founder Robert Anthony Alvarez and presidential fellows Melissa Baker-Boosamra and Renee Malkowski presented to the Senate to discuss the continued dedication to bring student law services accessible to all students at Grand Valley. The floor was opened for questions and comments.

1. Theakston: How will services work? Can students go in-person or just through phone services?

a. Alvarez: Honestly, I am open to students coming into our office, through Zoom, or over the phone. However the

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student wants to have that interaction, that's how I'll make it happen.

2. Guzman: I just want to give a huge thank you to Robert and Avanti Law, as well as Renee and Melissa for their incredible dedication and drive to accomplishing this.
3. Jackson: When will services become live?
 - a. Malkowski: We hope to have students testing our legal services before the Winter semester is over.

6. Student Life Fund Budget

- a. The 2026-2027 Student Life Fund Budget was voted on by the Student Senate. The General Assembly reviewed the budget at a previous GA (2/19) and asked questions to Chair Hartley then and prior to this vote.
 - i. Jackson: I will entertain a motion to approve the 2026-2027 Student Life Fund Budget.
 1. Vanlerberghe: So moved.
 2. Theakston: Second.
 - a. The motion passed unanimously, with a vote of 29-0-0, and the budget was approved.

7. Student Organization Advancement Legislation

- a. President Jackson presented the drafted Student Organization Advancement legislation.
 - i. Taverne: I think this is really important and beneficial for many organizations that don't have access to resources. For job purposes even, those in student organizations could potentially be hired through the resource center. This could tap into other upcoming student organizations and could be helpful.

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1. Jackson: I think down the line there could be an appetite for student employment, just not yet.
- ii. Theakston: Being optimistic, would we want them to reserve the center or first come first serve? Could multiple organizations share the center?
 1. Jackson: I don't know exactly, this is something to be worked upon.
- iii. Smith: I realize it is very hard for student orgs to get funding. I hope this space could offer some support in terms of fundraising and how a student organization can build itself from the ground up.
 1. Jackson: I agree. I believe we need to start meeting students and their fresh organizations where they are at. The hope is for this center to serve as a support base.
- iv. Stokes: How will this resource be advertised to student organizations? I know sometimes it can be difficult to find those resources.
 1. Jackson: Largely, I think we would collaborate with Bri Slager in the Office of Student Life, as well as even promoting it through the Senate.

8. Call for Announcements

a. Advisor Reports

- i. Guzman: Going back to Student Legal Services, I want to mention that it was actually a seniors honors project, not just legislation. Just to plant a seed for you as you work on legislation in the future! I also want to touch on Elections, I would say we're at our 40% mark on how many ballots have been cast so far. Please urge friends and peers to vote! That's all from me.

b. Chair Reports

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- i. Allocations - Lukas Hartley
 - ii. Public Relations - Sophie Gemmen
 - 1. Hello everyone! I hope you're all doing well on this fine Election Week.
 - 2. My one note is to remind you to fill out the merch interest form so I can get numbers to the Promotions Office, get a quote back, and get everything ordered for you as quickly as possible!
 - 3. Please let me know if you have any questions about that, or anything else, and enjoy these next few days of Michigan warmth!
 - iii. Advocacy - Genna Wright
 - 1. Hi everyone! So sorry I am not here today I am currently doing a speech for the Women In Politics Haustein Center Event Downtown.
 - 2. The advocacy committee will be having our women's history month movie night on the 31st 8-10 in Kirkhof arm Thornapple, the movie we will be playing is hidden figures and we will have popcorn!
 - 3. We also will be tabling in Kirkhof for Trans Visibility Awareness day on the 31st 11-2 in kirkhof in partnership with the Rainbow Resource Center! Please feel free to sign up for a time slot Senator Rodgers sent over slack this morning.
 - 4. With that being said, I hope everyone has a great weekend and I will see you all soon.
 - iv. Policy - Cera McDonough
 - 1. Good Evening Everyone, I hope everyone had a wonderful break. I am happy to see all of your faces again.

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2. Currently, Policy has 4 meetings scheduled. Tomorrow we are meeting with Britany Jones, who is a therapist on campus, regarding our upcoming Mindfulness Yoga event.
3. On March 24th @ 9am, we are meeting with the director of Sustainability. On March 26th @ 1:30pm, we are meeting with Parking services. This meeting will be held downtown.
4. On March 27th @ 12pm in Pere Marquette, Senators who volunteered during the zero waste games were nominated for Sustainability Champion Award. If you are able to attend, I sent a RSVP link in the general business channel. I will be attending.
5. Finally, we have a meeting on March 27th @ 10am with Alumni services. When Senator Roger met with them before Spring break, we discovered that students don't have a lot of knowledge about their services. Grayson has sent out a google form about their knowledge of Alumni Services in the general business channel. If you have not filled out this form, please do so. The questions in the form are direct questions that they requested for us to ask to gather a further understanding of what students know or don't know. Even if you don't know anything about their services, please don't hesitate to fill this out. The goal is to collect all the information and present it to them during our meeting.
6. Next week will be my last meeting and the last day as Policy chair. If you have any interest in running for Policy Chair, please reach out to me before the end of next week. I would love to meet with you and discuss everything policy related. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out! Thank you.

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v. Events - Karen Theakston

1. Happy National Cone Day! (Grab a free ice cream cone at DQ before they close!!) As VP Vanlerberge stated in general business, Elect Her is being postponed to April 13th, but will still take place in the Mary Idema Pew library. I will be putting a funding request in soon to update our tabling and make it more lively for the next academic year! Additionally, the mindfulness yoga event will be April 10th at 1pm in the dance studio at the RecWell center. This will still be counted as an event requirement since it was planned in this current student senate term! I yield.

c. General Announcements

- i. McDonough: I am the makeup director for 494 Fashion Magazine here at Grand Valley. On April 14th we are hosting our fashion show, as well as launching our magazine! We are looking for models, if you're interested in being a model for our fashion show or in attending!
- ii. Stokes: Ignite Dance Company is hosting their showcase on Friday, if you are interested in coming!
- iii. Jackson: We do need to take a picture for Day of Giving! We'll be taking a group photo before we all leave.

9. Public Comment

- a. No comments were made at this time.

10. Adjournment

- a. The meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM.