

# Grand Valley State University Student Senate

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Thursday, April 10th, 2025

Kirkhof 2204, 4:30pm

Chair: Evan Jackson

Vice Chair: Ty Vanlerberghe

Parliamentarian: William Laurin



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### *Agenda*

#### 1. **Call To Order**

- a. Approval of the Agenda
  - i. Agenda is approved.
- b. Approval of the Minutes
  - i. Minutes stand approved.
- c. Passing of the Papers

#### 2. **Public Comment**

#### 3. **Executive Reports**

- a. **President** - Evan Jackson
- b. **Vice President** - Ty Vanlerberghe
- c. **Chief of Staff** - Will Laurin

#### 4. **Overview of Cabinet Positions**

#### 5. **Overview of Elections Process**

#### 6. **Recess**

#### 7. **Cabinet Elections**

- a. Nominations and Elections for Allocations Chair
  - i. Hartley:

1. President Jackson, Vice President Vanlerberghe, and my fellow senators, it's an honor and a privilege to be speaking before you today. I greatly appreciate this opportunity.
2. For the new senators in the room who may not know me, congratulations on your election! My name is Lukas Hartley. I am a sophomore Honors Student double majoring in Political Science and Legal Studies with a minor in movement science. I am running for the chair of Allocations, and I believe I would bring a wealth of experience, qualifications, and new ideas to the position.
3. First, I have now served on the Student Senate for almost two years. I have built many important relationships with my fellow Senators, and have served on the Educational Affairs Committee, the Events Committee, and the Allocations

Committee. I love the Student Senate, and I love being surrounded by amazing people, with great ideas and talents. Student Senate has been a significant part of my college experience, and the experience and leadership provided by previous cabinets has been a part of what made Senate so special for me. By running for Chair, I want to pay my positive experience forward.

4. If I am elected, I would bring a significant amount of leadership experience to Cabinet. I currently serve as the President of the Zeta Sigma chapter of the Phi Kappa Tau social leadership fraternity. Under my leadership, my chapter has seen a 20% increase in membership, 100% new member retention rate, a balanced budget, and a completely clean disciplinary record. The welcoming and sustainable environment I've created in my chapter would translate well to the Cabinet, the Allocations Committee, and Student Senate as a whole. The skills I have honed as president include level-headedness, clear and coherent delegation, and strong, unbiased leadership which would all translate excellently to the Allocations Chair.
5. Also, this role involves effective and clear communication between the Allocations Chair and student organizations regarding funding requests and funding policies. These are skills I have sharpened at my internship at the Michigan Economic Development Company, where I am in the last month of my year-long term as an External Affairs Intern. In this position, I regularly conversed with stakeholders including State House and State Senate representatives about initiatives and policies of the MEDC. My communication and writing skills have also been honed by required training and professional development at the GVSU Writing Center, where I currently work as a writing consultant. Together, my skills, experience in leadership, and my professional communication experience have equipped me exceptionally well for this position.
6. Second, I am exceedingly prepared for the functional responsibilities of this role. I have sat on the Allocations Committee for the last year, attending weekly meetings and learning from Nancy about policies, precedents, and procedure. I have familiarized myself with the transitions report, GVSU funding guidelines, and other supporting documents to help me prepare for this role. I have met with Nancy, the former chair of Allocations, and several other former, current, and hopeful cabinet members to prepare for this role. Secondly, and equally important, I have met with several campus departments who are major stakeholders in the Student Life Fund which I would be overseeing. I have had extensive conversations with Jeremy Paul of Greek Life, and Bridie Tolley and

Katie Garrett of Campus Activities Board. These meetings have helped me gauge and prepare for the needs of the major stakeholders in the Student Life Fund.

7. Third, I have a clear and cohesive vision for the role of the Allocations Chair and the Allocations committee. Nancy Boyd, our former allocations chair, has laid down an incredible framework for allocations. She has set allocations in the right direction, and I will ensure it continues down that path. I plan to continue the weekly previews Nancy began to provide for the Allocations Committee every week to ensure maximum preparedness and understanding for every meeting. Also, Nancy's initiative to reserve a portion of funding for cultural programming is an important piece of Student Senate's mission to uphold a diverse campus, and is something I plan to continue and advocate for, as it is needed now more than ever. However, there is still more work to be done. More direct communication with both the general Senate body and the student population is needed. More detailed chair reports during General Assembly of the events hosted by registered student organizations and how much funding was approved would increase transparency. It would also allow senators to be educated about events all around campus, helping to promote a vibrant campus. Also, Allocations and Student Senate as a whole would benefit greatly from more increased promotions of the funding provided for student organizations and the events they create with that funding. My proposed initiative to create short form content every month to include footage, descriptions and real life student perspectives from the events Allocations funds every week would help the student body to see, appreciate and understand the work that Student Senate and the Allocations Committee does, and further our commitment to create a vibrant campus. I have extensively discussed this plan with prospective Public Relations Chair Sophie Gemmen, and am excited to implement it.
8. I will also bring an open approach to this chair position - any feedback, ideas or initiatives from committee members and general senators will be welcomed and encouraged.
9. Overall, I hope to have your support so I can bring my proven leadership experience, communication skills, experience on senate, and new ideas to this position. Together, we can continue to build on the amazing groundwork that has been laid for allocations and continue to foster transparency, engagement, and a vibrant campus. Thank you all!

ii. Discussion

1. Wright: What has best prepared you?

2. Hartley: I think that continuing relationships with greek life and other organizations that had already been formed.
3. McDonough: What are some of your weaknesses and how will you work to improve?
4. Hartley: I will work to be able to delegate as well as communicate better with others.
5. Eshleman: In light of recent events with federal funding how will you work to be able to navigate this?
6. Hartley: I would like to be able to help students in the best ways that we can no matter what because students are the biggest priority.
7. Gemmen: What are you most excited for?
8. Hartley: I am most excited to work with students and better understand the needs of students.
9. Shackleford: Did you go to all of the Allocations meetings?
10. Hartley: Yes, I did.
11. Eshleman: I have full confidence in his leadership.
12. Shackleford: He has talked to many senators about what he wants to do. His transparency is very good as well.
13. Theakston: I worked with him, and he is very good at helping others and is very in tune with others' needs.
14. Gemmen: I also worked with Senator Elect Hartley. He is good at making difficult decisions. He has also worked hard to meet with me so I feel his communication skills are good already even though he stated it as a weakness.

b. Nominations and Elections for Public Relations Chair

i. Gemmen:

1. President Jackson, Vice President Vanlerberghe, Chief of Staff Laurin, and my fellow Senators—both those I know well, and those I'm excited to get to know this coming term.
2. My name is Sophie Gemmen, and I will be entering my junior year at Grand Valley, studying Political Science with minors in Writing, Statistics, and Communications. I have served on Student Senate for three semesters, as a CLAS representative, a liaison to the University Writing Skills Committee, and a member of the Allocations Committee this last semester.
3. This last year, however, I have found a home in Public Relations, and it is a privilege to be here with you all today, running to lead this committee.
4. In all of my experience, there are three things I've learned that I intend to bring to my service as Chair: the value of communication and understanding different

*types* of communication; teamwork, which means trusting myself and trusting others; and perseverance when entering difficult, uncharted territory.

5. I owe past Senate leadership for encouraging me to join because my time, the work, and the relationships I've built here have been invaluable. I am eager to give back to this body, and to foster connections with future leaders as my predecessors have done for me.
6. PRC has become the perfect place for my skill set and interests. In my future, I hope to act as a bridge between both people and their policymakers, and policymakers and their constituents, and this is how I view our committee. This past year, I was a graphic designer and writer, where I worked to create enticing and informative graphics, began to incorporate a stronger written element to Senate communication, and proofread most materials to engage in this role.
7. PRC, per the bylaws, has been tasked with educating students and facilitating awareness of Senate actions, which requires a strong communication infrastructure. I see a lack of visibility as Senate's number one issue, and I believe Senate is far too valuable of a campus resource for it to fly under the radar.
8. It is my intention, then, to continue pursuing the goal of increasing Senate's visibility on campus. I see this as a three-part process.
9. First, I want to increase the clarity of communication channels. We utilize social media, print media, the bulletin board, emails, our website, LakerLink, and more, but all of these channels are oversaturated with content or outdated, making it difficult to reach students. Therefore, I would like to update the Student Senate website using specific methods I've learned in my writing and design classes. Additionally, I plan on ensuring the bulletin board and social media are regularly updated — and, to facilitate the incorporation of more written materials, I intend on taking up an initiative to create a Style Guide to help future bodies maintain a recognizable and consistent Senate voice. I hope the team I lead will help carry out these goals and introduce more ideas to increase Senate's reach on campus.
10. Second, I believe it is necessary to continue emphasizing word-of-mouth communication because I've seen its effectiveness in real-time. I'd like to help other Chairs foster stronger interactive practices when tabling, facilitate new outreach initiatives like focus groups, and support existing events like the Student Solutions Summit.
11. Lastly, while PRC stands mainly as an externally-focused committee, it is impossible to do our job without strong relationships internally. I want to work

collaboratively with other Chairs *and* senators to make sure your efforts are seen.

12. Ultimately, I am an organized, detail-oriented person. I am able to see the forest *and* the trees, and I am passionate and excited to return to this body and continue serving the students we represent.
13. I appreciate your consideration and your trust — I look forward to an amazing year with you all — and I am eager to answer any questions you may have.
14. Thank you.

ii. Questions

1. Theakston: What is one thing you are wanting to change on the website?
2. Gemmen: I am looking to work to better organize the information and make it more efficient for students to find. I would like to make it more appealing as well.
3. Taylor: How are you intending to make the bills that are passed more visible?
4. Gemmen: We want to make sure that the new pieces are at the top. I also like the idea of a newsletter or blog to better show information.
5. Uppala: What do you think is wrong with the current system?
6. Gemmen: I think that we are going in the right direction, but I think we are doing a lot at the same time and so we want to be specific with resources we are posting on as well as strengthening how we use our resources.
7. Buchanan: What do you think will be most challenging?
8. Gemmen: I am not a very extroverted person. I think it will be a challenge for me to put myself out there in order to achieve what needs to get done, but I am passionate and think I will be able to push through that.

iii. Discussion

1. Annis: I have worked with her on the Student Art Advisory and she is very good at advocating for students. She is very qualified for this position. She knows how to communicate.
2. Hartley: She is very passionate and has a very clear plan. She has very good ideas for aspects we could add.
3. Wright: As soon as she found out I was running for Advocacy chair, she wanted to meet and discuss goals for next year as well as what we could work together on.
4. Robinson: She is very passionate and always takes the initiative. She seems very qualified.
5. Uppala: She has the thought of bringing a change, and I think that is very good.

## 8. Cabinet Elections

a. Nominations and Elections for Advocacy Chair

i. Wright:

1. Hi everyone, for those of you that don't already know me, my name is Genna Wright, I am a rising Junior, I major in criminal justice and a minor in psychology, and this upcoming year, will be my 3rd year on Student Senate. It has truly been an honor to serve as your Advocacy Chair this past year, and I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to run for re-election. Reflecting on the progress we've made, the relationships we've built, and the strides we've taken toward making Grand Valley a more accessible, ethical, inclusive, and equitable community, I am so proud of all that we've accomplished. When I first took on the role of Advocacy Chair, I knew there would be challenges, but I also knew that the potential for meaningful change was vast. I was determined to ensure that every student's voice could be heard, that the concerns of those who often go unnoticed would be addressed, and that the advocacy we engaged in would directly impact the student experience.
2. One of the first things we did as a committee was reevaluate our mission to make sure it reflected our true purpose. We developed the following mission statement, which has guided our work this year:
3. *"The Advocacy Committee will uplift and amplify the voices and concerns of students, ensuring that their perspectives play a central role in shaping Grand Valley's efforts to foster a community that is more accessible, ethical, inclusive, and equitable for all. By advocating for these important issues, the Advocacy Committee will work to guide the university in creating an environment where every individual feels valued and supported."*
4. This mission was not just words on paper, it became our roadmap for everything we did. Over the past year, I have had the privilege of working alongside incredibly dedicated senators in the Advocacy Committee, as well as with other student groups and campus organizations. Together, we've worked on several initiatives and events that have helped promote visibility for diverse student voices and issues on campus. In October, we partnered with the Events Committee to organize breast cancer awareness month tabling. In November, we helped bring the annual Teach-In to life, a powerful event where students and faculty came together to educate each other about social justice issues. I had the honor of serving on the marketing committee, helping to promote and spread the word about the Teach-In, and was thrilled by the impact it had on students.
5. One of the most rewarding parts of this year was working closely with key student resource centers across campus which included, the Office of

Multicultural Affairs, the LGBT Resource Center, the Center for Women and Gender Equity, the Disability Resource Center, and the Padnos International Center. These partnerships have allowed us to advocate for and meet the unique needs of a broad spectrum of students. Another one of the highlights of this year was the success of Multicultural Night. Former senator Eapen, who served as the liaison for the Office of Multicultural Affairs, was inspired to create an event that would celebrate and amplify the diverse student organizations on campus. The event was a huge success. We received tons of positive feedback from students and faculty. As we look ahead to next year, we will continue to foster collaboration between our committees, work closely with student organizations, and create more opportunities for students to engage with their university. I am particularly excited about continuing to elevate our student centered events and enhancing the visibility and accessibility of campus resources. With that being said, some of my biggest goals for next year include more centered work with our collaborating liaisons, more interpersonal work between senate committees as I believe advocacy ties into all committees, and as I've grown and developed relationships on campus, I would love to collaborate more with other orgs and groups as well.

6. Having spent this past year in the role of Advocacy Chair, I have grown not only as a leader, but as a passionate advocate for the changes we need on campus. I've learned the importance of collaboration, listening, and empathy in advocating for every student. We need to ensure that Grand Valley continues to be a place where everyone feels they belong, where every student can succeed, and where the voices of underrepresented groups are not only heard but acted upon.
7. I am confident that with the experience I've gained this year and the dedication of the Advocacy Committee, we can continue to build a stronger, more inclusive community here at Grand Valley. Together, we can make sure that every student's voice matters. Thank you!

ii. Rodgers:

1. Hello everyone!
2. For those of you who might not know me, my name is Grayson Rodgers, and I am running for the role of Advocacy Chair. I am dual-majoring in Social Work and Sociology with a minor in Human Rights. From a young age, I have been committed to expanding my cultural competence and spreading cultural awareness wherever possible. As a future social worker, I have made it a priority to continue working to learn about social justice issues, social identities, and

how they impact us not only as college students but as people in society, especially during these uncertain times.

3. As an advocate for social justice, I believe that it's important to understand what "advocacy" means, to work within it, and to embrace the true impact that it has on all of us. Advocacy here at Grand Valley refers to the actions and efforts made to support, promote, and improve policies, practices, and resources. It involves speaking up for students, alumni, professors, staff, and the community to ensure that educational systems are equitable, effective, and accessible to ALL, which is the approach I want to take. Advocacy works to address disparities in education by ensuring that all students, regardless of their gender identity, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and class. I want to address "phobias" and "isms" that students in marginalized groups face on campus by listening and challenging the system that is negatively affecting so many students.
4. I believe it's necessary to embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion to effectively advocate for students so that these differences are recognized, respected, and celebrated. Learning and embracing diversity challenges our assumptions and biases, leading to a more well-rounded education and perspective on our community.
5. The 2024-2025 school year on the advocacy committee was a great experience, and I want to continue to expand on that experience by taking a more leadership-heavy role. The Advocacy Committee works with numerous GVSU resource centers, for example, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Center for Women and Gender Equity. In my first term, I spent time with the LGBT+ resource center to advocate for their needs as new challenges arrived. This experience has allowed me to counter-protest hate directed towards the transgender community as well as give back to LGBT+ youth. I have prepared for this position by meeting with former and current members of the student senate as well as reading the transition reports.
6. As Advocacy Chair, my role is to empower the issues and voices of students who can make Grand Valley more accessible, inclusive, and equitable by working effectively with my team. I will make sure that everyone is heard and seen by keeping ongoing communication with liaisons and centers about events, concerns, and ideas.
7. I plan to focus my efforts in four areas: 1. Create and host more events to expand our knowledge about diverse communities on campus by collaborating with the events committee and resource centers. 2. Doing more inclusive work with

programs around campus, such as TRIO, The Oliver Wilson Scholars Program, and Fostering Laker Success. 3. Advocate for trainings to grow cultural competence within GVSU, especially the Department of Public Safety. 4. Collaborate with Policy, PRC, and Events to expand our impact on campus to advocate for more students. By turning our words into action, we can provide the resources we say we have and provide them to everyone who needs them to succeed.

8. In the role of Advocacy Chair, I will guide our team towards our shared goals and use my leadership to create an environment of collaboration and expansion.
9. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to what the future holds.

iii. Driver:

1. Advocacy is about more than just speaking - Advocacy is about creating space, raising awareness, and being a voice for those who may feel unheard. I believe I would be a strong candidate for Advocacy Chair because I am passionate about representing all students — especially students of color and other minority groups who might feel like they don't have access to the same resources, opportunities, or support as others on campus.
2. As a student of color myself, I understand how isolating it can feel to navigate spaces where your voice isn't always prioritized or your experiences aren't always understood. That's why I want to step into this leadership role — to be a voice for students who might not feel like they have one. I want to advocate for inclusivity, equity, and access to resources for everyone, regardless of their background, gender, or sexual identity. No student should feel like they are alone or unsupported.
3. I understand that advocacy is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Different students face different challenges, and I want to help bridge those gaps by listening to their needs and working toward meaningful solutions. My approachable personality allows me to connect with a wide range of people, and I am committed to being someone who others feel comfortable coming to with concerns, ideas, or feedback.
4. I am dedicated to action, not just talking and planning. I don't want to simply hear people's concerns — I want to work with them to create change. I want to raise awareness about issues that matter to our student body, whether it's mental health, diversity and inclusion, academic resources, or campus safety. I am prepared to collaborate with student organizations, faculty, and administration to

ensure that all students have a platform to express themselves and push for progress.

5. I am organized, dependable, and driven. I know that being an effective leader requires strong communication skills, creative problem-solving, and the ability to follow through on commitments. I am ready to take on the responsibility of Advocacy Chair and work hard to represent the student body with integrity, empathy, and passion. I want to uplift voices that are often overlooked, create safe spaces for important conversations, and ensure that every student — regardless of race, background, identity, or circumstance — knows they belong here.
6. I want to use this position not just as a title — but as a tool to make a real difference. I am ready to be that voice, that leader, and that advocate.
7. If chosen as Advocacy Chair, I have several ideas for how I can make a difference on campus. Some things I would like to do include:
  - a. Hosting open discussion forums or “safe space” events where students can share their experiences, voice their concerns, and connect with others who may feel the same way.
  - b. Working to create or promote resource guides specifically for students of color, first-generation students, students part of the LGBTQ+ and other marginalized groups — making sure they know where to find mental health services, academic support, and cultural organizations.
  - c. Collaborating with other student organizations to plan cultural events, awareness campaigns, and educational workshops that promote diversity and highlight different voices on campus.
  - d. Partnering with administration to advocate for more accessible resources, inclusive policies, and representation for underrepresented students in leadership roles and decision-making spaces.
  - e. Creating surveys or suggestion boxes where students can anonymously submit concerns or ideas — ensuring that everyone has a way to be heard, even if they are shy or nervous about speaking publicly.

iv. Potter Speech

1. Introduction
2. List of experience and what I do
3. What I could do as advocacy chair
4. Conclusion

v. Discussion

1. Hartley: If each of you had to pick an experience or trait that would make you the best candidate?
2. Wright: I think that I have been able to put myself out there and work on my leadership skills. I want to work on being able to reach out to senators more and have connections. I think my personality allows people to feel comfortable coming to me for guidance.
3. Rodgers: For me, I started an organization, so it was good to be able to advocate for students who did not have many resources. I would like to work to be able to hear everyone's voices.
4. Driver: When events are on campus, I like to be at the events that are important to me. I want to bring these events to the senate and show other students we care about them. I think that I have a growth mindset and I am growing everyday,
5. Potter: I am also working on a growth mindset. I have had an open mind to all groups of people. I am always willing to listen and be able to understand their experiences. I also understand that many people look for someone who is trustworthy, communicative, and willing to learn.
6. Robinson: Could you discuss some ideas you have to work with other organizations on campus?
7. Rodgers: I would like to make mandatory training for the department of safety to train them. We want to make sure that everyone is trained fairly.
8. Driver: I would like to work with many organizations on campuses and have safe spaces and open discussion nights to discuss short term change.
9. Potter: I would like to outreach to many groups and discuss what they need as organizations. I think we can better the student body as a whole by spreading information. In my opinion, education is important.
10. Wright: I think that working with other organizations on campus is important. I also think that working with many resource centers on campus. I think it would be beneficial for all students to work together. As the Advocacy chair last year, I was able to create a lot of relationships with other organizations. I would also like to work with Padnos International Center to make students feel more safe.
11. Shackleford: How do you plan to navigate threats or problems against DEI?
12. Driver: There are so many issues. I do not have a direct answer because there is so much going on right now. I would personally like to go through certain sections that would affect GVSU students specifically.
13. Potter: There are always going to be people who do not agree. I am open to criticism as long as it is respectful. I think that hateful ways are not good. If we work together, we can better get rid of hate.

14. Wright: This is a difficult question to tackle. I want to be there to advocate for all students even in the hard times. I just want to do what is best for our students and have an open mind.
15. Rodgers: It is a tough question. I say we should take it one day at a time. I think that doing research is important and making sure that the information that we look at is true. I would like to better show the resources to help students.
16. Vamella: How will you work to help students rather than use your own opinions?
17. Potter: I think that we should have individual people being willing to meet or provide feedback. I would want to make sure that decisions are made with everyone and not alone. It should be collective.
18. Wright: I would make sure that I engaged with students and got student opinions. We have done things this past year to gauge student opinions and input. We did the Student Solutions Summit. Next year, it would be best to engage with other organizations to help all students on campus.
19. Rodgers: I think we should send out a survey to best understand student needs. The Summit and doing things like that are good ways to better understand what students need and what they want.
20. Driver: When it comes to any leadership position it is important to have passion, but it is important to understand all students rather than just a certain group. Feedback is valuable as we then are able to get the best response and do the best thing.
21. Pandey: What are your plans to help international students?
22. Wright: I think I would like to work with Padnos or a speaker to come and speak to help all students better understand what is going on. It is hard to know what to do exactly, but Padnos seems like the best option.
23. Rodgers: I think the first step is understanding everything fully. From there, we should get resources for students to understand. It might help to have an event to discuss and be here for students.
24. Driver: This is something that students shouldn't have to worry about. I wonder if we could collaborate with Replenish to help students get something so that they do not have to worry about everything.
25. Potter: We should better help students be able to voice their concerns and be listened to.
26. Hartley: We are in hard times when it comes to the world. I want to voice my support for Genna Wright. She has done a great job overall and I think she would do well.

27. Shackleford: She was my chair, and she worked so hard to work with all organizations. She is very qualified.
28. Westbrook: I would like to voice for Genna Wright because she is very qualified and knows what is going on.
29. Eshleman: I have gotten to know Genna Wright and she is a very good person and stands up for what she can believe in. She has my full support.
30. Gemmen: I want to say that I appreciated Grayson Rodgers concrete steps. He had a clear plan and knew what he wanted to do.
31. McDonough: I think that both Wright and Rodgers. I think that Rodgers answered questions fully.
32. Robinson: I think that Wright has experience already in the role. I want to show support for the new senators. Driver said she was very open to criticisms and got up there.
33. Taylor: I believe and support Rodgers. He seemed to be able to help all students.
34. Buchanan: I think that both Wright and Rodgers are very good options.
35. Pandey: I want to give my support for Rodgers as he is always advocating for all students.
36. Vettori: I want to voice my support for Driver. She knew a lot about what goes on.
37. Richard: I want to support Driver as well. She is very passionate and knows a lot about campus.
38. Westbrook: I want to also voice my support for Driver. She speaks her opinion. She will stand up for what needs to be said.
39. Sanchez: Driver shows a lot of passion and all of the recent things going on. Her ability to take on this role will be very strong.
40. Shackleford: I want to support Wright again because she really knows what is going on.
41. VanDyke: I want to voice my support for Wright. I think she will be a good leader.
42. Eshleman: I think that past experience and success will help in this role. We know that Wright will do well and look to her success.
43. Schwallier: I think that being a leader is important. Wright has the most experience.
44. Hardgrave: I think that experience speaks for itself, but creativity and innovation is important for the role.
45. Theakston: I think that having additional experience of being on the Senate is valuable. Wright has had much experience, and is the best candidate right now.

46. Hartley: I think it is important to remember that everyone that ran and does not win will be heard.
47. Hartley: I think we still need proven leadership and Wright is the best option.
48. Eshleman: I have full confidence in knowing that everyone that ran today has great ideas, I know that Wright will be able to confidently and effectively use others ideas in her role.
49. Westbrook: I would like to say that I want to support Driver. I am in a lot of student organizations where people are not represented. I would like to see someone new that will come and be in the office of multicultural affairs. I would like someone new with new ideas.
50. Robinson: I would like to reiterate that the ideas of the other candidates will not go away if they do not win. I think we need experience.
51. Robach: Wright has demonstrated her dedication. I think she does a very good job at helping students on campus.
52. Scott: I think that the other two will be able to grow under Wright and then be ready in the future.
53. Uppala: I think that we need to have someone new. There is nothing wrong with a new perspective. As an international student, I felt the best with her.
54. Vettori: I think that we should have someone new and fresh. Driver spoke from the heart and is very passionate. She knows a lot about things on campus.
55. Hartley: I was just elected to a cabinet position and so did Gemmen. We did not run before. Therefore, there will be mostly new people in the cabinet. I think that having some experience will happen.
56. Eshleman: I think lots of people have great ideas, but it takes a lot to change things on campus. Therefore, Wright has the best knowledge to go forward with this as she has done it before.
57. Shackelford: I think we should vote for someone who is already connected on campus.
58. Taylor: I would like to say that having fresh people can bring new perspectives on advocacy. There are people to help them through the process.

## 9. Recess

### a. Nominations and Elections for Policy Chair

#### i. Annis:

1. Good afternoon, I would like to begin by prefacing that just like many of you, this position I seek is one that I do not have experience with. I am, however, truly ready and willing to take the leadership position of Policy Chairman in the

Student Senate to advocate for student voices in every sector of on and off campus life.

2. Ever since I came to Grand Valley I knew I wanted to be a part of student government. As someone who has always enjoyed reaching out and talking to those about their knowledge and experiences, I knew that Student Senate wouldn't just be a good organization— but the best fit for me. I know that there are many in this room who can share that sentiment. Seeing injustices, both social and economic, and wanting to use your platform to raise the concerns up, so that they may reach the ears of those who can do something about these pressing issues. After all, that is what we senators are doing right now. Taking time out of our busy college careers, so that we can be the mouthpieces of a vast interconnected web of students, each one unique in their past, knowledge, experiences, wisdom, and dreams.
3. Now, after serving my first two terms as a general senator I have felt emboldened to push myself forward and carry a higher standard into my senate career. I have the drive and an unwavering commitment to making all student's lives better and supporting my local ecosystem: socially, academically, and environmentally. As the insurmountable concerns by members of our communities increase, as the world around us is rapidly changing, now is the time for strong leadership that stands up for its constituents; I will not waver. From every first year to graduate student, they need a voice that represents them and their interests. as passionate as I do. And I know that they, if elected, would do a fine job. But I am here to tell you that I will advocate for every inch of ground in improving our lives. By communicating with students, faculty and staff we can accomplish more than we ever could imagine. As it was said in the 2024-2025 Student Senate, we have come back (After the reconstruction).
4. So fellow members of this Senate, let me tell you what I plan to do:
  - a. Housing, an ever prevalent concern of students. One that the Policy Committee must be tuned into and willing to walk lock step in solidarity with the student body. In this regard, I would continue the monthly meetings with the Director of Housing Dr. Kyle Boone. So that the students can know that this body and its members take housing seriously and are willing to send their senior members into meetings. This includes, but is not limited to: pricing, building integrity, housing options, concerns regarding RAs and concerns from RAs.
  - b. Laker Food Co. is always a topic of concern: whether that be sanitation, food waste, menu options, etc. Students care deeply about their dietary

needs. As do I. What I do know is that thousands of our peers regularly dine at Dish, Blue, Panda, etc and they need a voice. To ensure that vegetarian, vegan, coeliac, or any other dietary restraint is being understood and met. And not just in one dining hall, but all of them.

- c. I know that there are members of this body that value IT, as does the entirety of the student body. I cannot overstate how often I am told how poor our WIFI works, and that something needs to be done about it. Moreover, the concerns about what the Grand Valley is doing to ensure our online data is safe and secure. Therefore, I will make it a priority for myself and the committee that we continue to address technological concerns in an ever-changing landscape.
- d. Speaking of safety we have GVPD, the arm of this college that ensures that our physical safety is kept and ensured. From car break ins, personal injury, theft, domestic disputes, or any other criminal activity. I had the pleasure of meeting with Chief DeHann on numerous occasions, and even though his retirement is around the corner, I know that Student Senate will maintain a colloidal relationship with GVPD to tackle public safety issues together. And it is a personal mission of mine that the Student Senate is active in public safety discussions relating to criminal and noncriminal activity. Student voices and concerns must be heard by our law enforcement to ensure a more safe campus.
- e. Parking, everyone's favourite topic. It is hard to imagine paying hundreds of dollars for an additional permit, to gain access to a parking spot on university grounds when we all already pay ten thousand dollars to attend GVSU. And yet that is exactly what we must do. Therefore, something must be done to directly address this issue. I will work diligently to see that our permit costs are reassessed and justified to be a more fair price, so that additional financial burden can be alleviated from student shoulders. Furthermore, I would like to highlight the work by fellow Policy Committee member, Senator Eshlman, who has met with parking on multiple occasions and will be a wonderful partner to work forward in this effort in whichever capacity we secure tonight.
- f. Moving on is a topic close to my heart. As some of you may know I am a Natural Resource Management (NRM) major. Although our government's view on environmental policy has changed, I am very

happy to see that the environmental sciences and advocacy is starting to fill senate seats. And it has emboldened me to request more from this university to improve, sustain, and advocate for environmental policy. For these new senators are a mandate from the student body that shows unwavering support for our environment and to fight against injustice wherever it may be. So what do I plan to do? To start, the Sustainable Agriculture Project needs financial support, our sustainability department needs manpower, and our campus needs to address runoff into the ravines. As a general senator I was able to meet with the sustainability director, Yumiko Jakobcic, she can tell us what we can do to help her and we can try our damndest to do it. And as Policy Chair I seek to only raise the voices of students concerned with Grand Valley sustainability higher. We have been pioneers in this front for decades, and we should never lose sight of who we are. Stewards of the land and caregivers to our neighbors.

g. Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to recognize our transfer and international students. Transfer students are concerned about orientation that fails to introduce them to campus appropriately. Moreover, our international students must be supported and cared for, especially in these times. Former Senator James knew the value of our international community and passed legislation directed at supporting them, a legacy I will work towards myself. We are an institution that values international customs, culture, and approach, for there is value in culture exchange. And we, as a community, will not sit idly by while we watch our friends fall victim to tyranny.

5. No matter who wins this position I will continue the fight, never back down from the next challenge and I will rise up to every occasion. This committee, that I've had the privilege of serving on, showed me the value in a unified voice; that when individuals come together we become an unstoppable force in the pursuit of community and cooperation above the self-interest of an individual. That is all, thank you all.

ii. Eshleman:

1. Good evening, fellow senators-elect, I am honored to be speaking here tonight as a nominee for Policy Chair. For those of you who I have not had a chance to introduce myself to yet, my name is Michael Eshleman, I will be a junior this fall, and I am studying Biomedical Sciences on the Pre-Med track. As we complete this semester, I will have had the privilege of serving on this Student

Senate for three semesters now, joining in the winter semester of my freshman year. During my tenure on the Senate, I served on the Campus Affairs Committee prior to the restructuring efforts, and since then I have sat on the Policy Committee as a general senator, meeting with liaisons from around campus and ensuring student voices are being heard when decisions are being made.

2. Throughout my time on the Senate, I have had the opportunity to learn many things from those around me. That time has taught me how to navigate the university's internal structures — the procedures, processes, and the politics that are involved in establishing real relationships with stakeholders on campus. Through my work on the Policy Committee, I've met regularly with directors from departments like Housing and Parking—not only to understand long-term plans like the Housing 10-Year Master Plan, but also to bring student concerns directly into the conversation. I've worked to better understand how Parking operates and to explore ways to reduce the cost of parking permits. These ongoing efforts, though often behind the scenes, lay the groundwork for ensuring students are heard by those making decisions that impact our daily lives.
3. With that foundation in place, I am ready to step into the role of Policy Chair with a clear sense of purpose and direction, and my priorities remain as clear as ever. As many of you may know, I ran to be the Student Senate President on the foundation of expanding liaison relationships and fostering new, transparent dialogue between the student body and administration. And while I did not succeed in becoming Student Senate President, I remain steadfast in my commitment to seeing these goals carried out.
4. And while these goals cannot be achieved alone, here is how I, as Policy Chair, will work to see these goals become reality. As it stands, the Policy Committee does not have any structure for meeting in any regular capacity with higher administration — specifically, members of the Senior Leadership Team, President Mantella, and the Board of Trustees. This presents itself as a clear and strategic opportunity to expand the Student Senate's reach to some key players within the university. As it remains impractical to invite all these stakeholders to GA, establishing regular touchpoints with them is the most direct and effective manner to ensure the voices of the students are being heard in the upper echelons of the university. As previously mentioned, these goals cannot be achieved by the work of one senator or even one committee. Fostering inter committee cooperation will be critical to ensuring our efforts yield the results

students need and deserve. As Policy Chair, I will work to ensure that we are collaborating with other committees effectively. That could look like bringing in members of PRC to a meeting with the SLT Chief of Public Affairs, or members of Advocacy to a meeting with the SLT Vice President for People, Equity, and Culture. The opportunities for cross-committee cooperation are expansive and currently underutilized. As I have experienced it, committees often operate independently of each other, which isn't inherently a bad thing — we can't all be experts in everything — but I intend to set new precedents in fostering working relationships between the Policy Committee and the other standing committees of Student Senate to encourage collaboration on shared initiatives and issues that cross committee lines.

5. While internal collaboration within the Senate is essential, it is just as important that we maintain strong working relationships with those in the UAS, ECS, and other external GVSU departments, — because our work doesn't end when we pass a piece of legislation. As Policy Chair, I will be committed to ensuring that every piece of legislation passed by this body doesn't just sit on paper, but is actively followed through, advocated for, and implemented wherever possible.
6. In closing, I've spent the last three semesters learning exactly how this university operates — from the inside out. I understand the systems, the politics, and the people. I've built the relationships, studied the processes, and positioned myself to lead effectively. That experience matters — because this role demands more than just ambition. It demands readiness. Thank you for your time and your attention and I look forward to hopefully serving with you all as your Chair of the Policy Committee.

iii. McDonough:

1. Hello everyone,
2. My name is Cera McDonough. I'm a neuroscience major with a minor in psychology, and I want to start by congratulating all of you—especially our new senators—on such an impressive first day. The energy, engagement, and passion I've already seen give me great confidence in what we're going to accomplish together next year.
3. A little about me: I've been involved in the Student Senate for the past year, serving on the Policy and Allocations Committees, and representing the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. During my time, I've held meetings with university liaisons, the Dean of CLAS, and directors from various departments—including Sustainability, Orientation, Admissions, and Oliver Wilson Scholars Program. These experiences have taught me how to be an

effective leader and advocate for student voices. Which also has helped me establish positive relationships with campus stakeholders that I plan on seeing grow.

4. On Policy and Allocations, I gained a deep understanding of both the structural side of student government and the importance of relationship-building. I've worked on initiatives to improve sustainability, enhance orientation—especially for transfer students—and increase retention through better student support. On Allo, I've also helped make funding decisions and have learned how essential transparency and collaboration are in all that we do.
5. Now, I'm ready to take the next step by running for Policy Chair.
6. I believe my experience, combined with my passion for advocacy, positions me well to lead this committee. My goal is to build on the strong foundation left by our former chair, Alec Palumbo, by continuing to foster closer relationships with liaisons and making policy a central resource for all senators.
7. After last week's general assembly, I reviewed the minutes, and took note of the body's interests such as Laker Food Co, Housing, Student Employment, Parking and AOD — I hope to be a touch point for these departments. Specifically, my goal for the beginning of the new term is to reach out to the liaisons that have fallen through the cracks last year. Reaching out to departments we haven't gained a relationship with is important because it will help the Senate keep a well-rounded understanding of the inner workings of campus and put Senate on their radars as a resource for them.
8. Additionally, I want the Policy Committee to be a hub for legislative guidance—supporting senators in understanding how legislation works, how to write it, and who to connect with on campus. I envision workshops, hands-on support, and a restructured approach that empowers every senator—not just those on Policy—to engage confidently in the legislative process.
9. In addition, I'd like to see stronger collaboration across all committees. Too often, we work in silos. I want to break down those barriers and build a more unified Senate that showcases our collective impact.
10. In short, I'm running for Policy Chair because I believe in the power of student voices—and I want to make sure those voices are heard, supported, and turned into meaningful change.
11. Thank you for your time, and I hope to earn your support.

iv. Dykstra:

1. Speech

v. Discussion

1. Shackleford: For Dykstra, you mentioned being in many clubs. You said you do not show up to meetings. How do you expect us to trust you to show up for this if you don't show up to those.
2. Dykstra: I think that I would be really good at delegating.
3. Dolnik: What is your biggest accomplishment in relation to your position?
4. Annis: I have met with sustainability a lot. I have worked to get relationships grown before asking for things.
5. Eshleman: I would say the biggest for me was being able to attend and speak up at department meetings. I have been able to speak on behalf of the student body.
6. McDonough: I went along with Annis to meet with sustainability. We made it possible to have a zero waste football game. I would say being able to put myself out there and ask the big questions. There is a committee that talks about admission and orientation.
7. Dykstra: I saved my company money by reorganizing how administration is done. I know how to get things done.
8. Hartley: What differentiates your plan to increase communication with liaisons and departments?
9. Eshleman: I would like to meet with the liaisons on a regular basis. When this is not happening, liaisons are not able to communicate as well. When you are regularly meeting with them you are able to have them actively think about what you were talking about in the previous meetings.
10. McDonough: Legislation in policy makes big changes on campus. If we get more involved on campus with liaisons or partners we can better build relationships. This can help with writing future legislation.
11. Dykstra: Meeting is important. Meetings in person mean a lot more than meetings over email.
12. Annis: I think that allocation of tasks, monthly meetings, and more are important. If we listen to others on campus it helps to better understand the needs of campus.
13. Gemmen: What do you think your leadership style is and how will you use this to manage the committee.
14. McDonough: I am big on collaboration and working as a team. With policy, it is important to work together to get the job done.
15. Dykstra: Open discussion is important and you will get things done quicker.
16. Annis: I think that it is a committee that has to work together. There is not just one person in the committee. Everyone should have an equal voice to choose what they want to do.

17. Eshleman: I admired the way the former chair was always there to help me do things, but allowed me to do what I wanted to do. I want to be there ready to help and do whatever is needed. I want to be a resource.
18. Vettori: Annis and McDonough, can you further explain what you are doing for Sustainability?
19. Annis: I want to be able to use funds to help out Sustainability. I also want to better think about runoff into the Ravines. This could cause our buildings to fall into the ravines
20. McDonough: Annis and I worked together volunteering at the Sustainability Center. I want to work to see if we can get buses there. I want to find more volunteer opportunities with Sustainability.
21. Taylor: What specifically do you plan on doing with housing?
22. Dykstra: Lots of housing is not owned by GVSU. I think that we can do better with housing.
23. Annis: I want to do what students want to do. I want to talk to other students about what they want or what they need. We should especially talk to RA's. When we did our Student Solutions Summit, we listened to what students wanted directly. Listening is very important.
24. Eshleman: Housing is a big topic on campus. I do not have the end solution to solve all the problems. I think that we should make sure that the updates are being done to the buildings to make them liveable and safe.
25. McDonough: I am not very knowledgeable about housing as I am a transfer student. We should keep a good relationship with Kyle Boone in the future. This would make sure that we can advocate for students with immediate needs.
26. Robach: You work with GVSU stakeholders, can you elaborate?
27. Dykstra: I think that it was in confidence, but stakeholders are upset over things.
28. Hardgrave: If you could do one major sustainability project on campus with no limit on funds what would it be?
29. Annis: I would like to work to stop the problems in the ravines. I would also create a larger sustainability building. We really need to have more sustainability staff.
30. Eshleman: I think there is a lack of funding in sustainability. If money is no issue, then sustainability will have better funds.
31. McDonough: I would fund and have more sustainability education. I would have more access to volunteering at the building. There is not very easy access. It would be a good first step to gain more visibility.

32. Dykstra: We should be using the money we are given. We should reinvest money into the colleges.
33. Uppala: There used to be a policy where Laker Food Co employees got 5 meals a week and now is revoked. How will you tackle this?
34. Eshleman: This seems like something that should be brought up in our meetings with Laker Food Co. I am not sure why this decision was made. This is something that I want to fight for.
35. McDonough: I think it is important to reach out to them to figure out why this changed and more details. This would form the relationships to possibly better understand why.
36. Dykstra: Many of the employees are students, and having a good reputation about treatment is important. It is important to treat people with respect.
37. Annis: I want to talk to students who it affects directly because then we can talk to them specifically with students who it affects directly.
38. Driver: How would you make sure that the students are being heard?
39. McDonough: I think it is important to talk to all of the committee on what they want to do and what they think they can do. Therefore we are working on what all students want.
40. Dykstra: It is important to be better at tabling and bringing things up.
41. Annis: We have a sample of students here. We can ask the students here questions and better understand their needs.
42. Eshleman: I plan to work to allow my committee to do what they want to do and be a resource. I want to help others do what they want to do while having what they need to succeed. I also feel that I can separate personal from work.
43. Scott: What does a successful term as chair look like?
44. Dykstra: I would say it would be maintaining what we do well and adding to make sure that we are doing things efficiently and well.
45. Annis: I want to build relationships with liaisons and senators. I think it is important to make sure that we understand what students want rather than what we want specifically. If we can implement what students want, I find that successful.
46. Eshleman: I want to see progress. That can be in many different forms. It can be liaison meetings, us talking to students and more. I want to prioritize being out on campus and see what students want to see change on campus. What concerns do students want to see addressed?

47. McDonough: I think I would want to build off of former chair Palumbo. I would like to better explain to senators how to write legislation and what should be done when writing legislation.
48. Dolnik: What do you want to see with parking?
49. Annis: This is something that certain people would be better at than others. Eshleman would do very well at this one.
50. Eshleman: I worked very closely with parking over the past year. I have met with them a lot. I think that the money that comes from tickets should go to students who are not getting tickets. I want money from other things to go back to students and parking.
51. Dolnik: Working with Eshleman, we worked to meet with many organizations and met with students to figure out what students need. This is valuable.
52. Panday: I would like to support McDonough as I believe that she can be the most valuable to run our policy committee.
53. Shackelford: Eshleman has reached out to many of us, and so I believe that he will be able to lead us best.
54. Sanchez: I would like to support Eshleman. I have worked with him in and out of the Senate. He is able to collaborate with others and has shown lots of growth overall in his roles on the Senate.
55. Gemmen: I would like to support McDonough. She stands true on everything she stands for. She hopes to foster a community on the senate and she is the strongest candidate.
56. Rodgers: I want to support McDonough, because she works with many different departments on campus.
57. Taylor: I would like to support McDonough. She has a lot of knowledge about policy and seems to know the role the most. She also wants to work with all departments on campus.
58. Vandyke: I want to voice my support for Eshleman. He worked very hard even after he did not win the presidential election.
59. Theakston: I would like to voice my support for McDonough. She has many ideas. This helps to have goals throughout the year.
60. Shackelford: I still voice my support for Eshleman. He did a very good campaign trail.
61. Hartley: I think that any of these candidates would do well in this position.
62. Dykstra: I want to endorse Eshleman.
63. Annis: I want to support Eshleman. He knows what he is doing.
64. Theakston: She does well with communication and this would help.

65. Gemmen: I want to voice my support for McDonough. She would be able to foster the positive climate for communication.
66. Driver: I would like to voice my support for McDonough. She allows everyone to have a voice.
67. Taylor: McDonough is the best candidate for a leader. She is a good person and is a good candidate.

## 10. Cabinet Elections

### a. Nominations and Elections for Events Chair

#### i. Theakston:

1. Hello, everyone! For those newly elected senators who may not know me yet, my name is Karen Theakston, and I'm a psychology major with a minor in Juvenile Justice. I'm set to graduate next year and hope to get in the Occupational Therapy Masters program at GV. I have been in the Senate for almost two years and have been a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences representative, which I have regained that leadership role for this next academic year. This winter term, I had the honor of being the Events Chair, where I thoroughly enjoyed planning and organizing initiatives like Last Lecture, Elect Her, and our bonding events. I'm looking forward to building on that experience and making an even greater impact this year.
2. To share a bit more about my background, I've contributed to our public relations and allocations committee, participated in numerous university committee meetings, and served as a Mental Health Ambassador with the Counseling Center. These experiences have shaped my growth in the Senate and strengthened my leadership skills within our organization.
3. For the upcoming year, I have several goals and plans for our events committee. I aim to foster greater collaboration with various organizations and departments on campus, as well as engage with the local community and businesses beyond the university. My primary objective is to establish a strong foundation for this committee, ensuring our events have a meaningful impact on GVSU students and contribute to creating a more vibrant and inclusive campus environment.
4. To achieve this, I plan to distribute our events more evenly throughout the year and schedule major events for each semester. One idea I've been considering is moving Last Lecture to the fall semester instead of spring, to prevent the committee from being overwhelmed with planning during the end of the academic year. Additionally, I want to make our tabling efforts more interactive, encouraging students to engage with senators and gain valuable insights to enhance their college experience.

5. Our bonding events have been a fantastic way for senators to connect, but there's room to foster broader interactions beyond existing social circles. Expanding these events could include activities off campus, such as attending a Griffins hockey game, visiting the John Ball Zoo, or watching a movie together. At the same time, I plan to maintain accessible on-campus bonding events that strengthen teamwork and leadership skills within our organization.
6. Currently, our events are primarily focused on the University, but I aim to broaden the scope of this committee by creating opportunities for students to take a break from academics while still being on campus. One idea is to develop an event similar to Lakerpalooza, but as a student senate-sponsored initiative. Drawing inspiration from other universities, I've noticed they successfully integrate local businesses into campus life, helping students engage with the community. This could be achieved through events like a farmers market or bringing more local businesses on campus—adapted in a way that best fits our campus culture.
7. As this will be my final year in the Senate, I am dedicated to bringing these ideas forward through the committee to make the Senate more impactful for our **Lakers** and leave a lasting legacy at GVSU. This organization has profoundly influenced my personal growth by helping me build connections, be involved on campus, enact change, and seize empowering opportunities. Sharing this enriching experience with students outside of our organization is something I am truly passionate about, and I believe the events committee is pivotal in achieving this.
8. Thank you for listening to my speech. I am eager to work toward these goals—and more—as Events Chair and look forward to collaborating with each of you in the upcoming academic year. Together, I believe we can create meaningful experiences, strengthen our community, and make a lasting impact on GVSU students.

ii. Discussion

1. Gemmen: Since this will be your last year, is there anything you want to leave as a legacy?
2. Theakston: I want to have something that isn't so university oriented. I want to make sure that we can have something that will be fun for all students.

11. **Committee Selections**

12. **Call for Announcements**

- a. Advisor Reports

- i. Guzman: Welcome to the Student Senate. I am one of the advisors. I will see you all in the fall
- b. General Announcements
  - i. Hartley: I need 4-6 senators for an allocations meeting next Friday. This is only for returning senators. This will be a one time commitment.

**13. Public Comment**

**14. Adjournment at 8:53 pm**