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## **Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting on July 22, 2008**

The fourth regularly scheduled meeting of GAPSA Executive Board was convened on July 22, 2008 at 6:12 PM in the second floor conference room of the Graduate Student Center.

### **Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum**

Present were: Andrew Rennekamp, Sarah Smith, Christina Arlt, Nikki Thorpe, Alexandra Kotsovos, Alejandro Hagan, Christa Heyward and Jessica Kim.

Also present via teleconference was: Esther Agbaje.

Notes of absence were received from Mat Abramsky, Saurabh Madaan, and Vicky Doan-Nguyen.

### **Approval of the Minutes from Prior Meetings**

The changes to last meeting's minutes put forth by GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp and Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe were unanimously approved.

### **Reports**

#### *Chair's Report*

#### Absence

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp will be out of the country for one week. Mr. Rennekamp will have brief, intermittent access to the Executive Board via email. If there is an urgent matter, direct any concerns to First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan.

#### Trustees Committee on External Affairs for 2008-2009

Mr. Rennekamp will sit on the External Affairs Trustee Committee in addition to the Budget and Finance Committee. There were no objections to this announcement.

#### Upcoming GAPSA meeting with the Vice Provost for Facilities and Real Estate Services

Mr. Rennekamp and Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe will meet with the manager of Facilities and Real Estate Services this coming Friday. The Executive Board should direct any questions to Mr. Rennekamp or Ms. Thorpe so that they may discuss any issues on Friday. The Vice Provost for Facilities and Real Estate Services deals with the union side of the University of Pennsylvania. Currently union contracts are being negotiated and in the future, GAPSA will receive more information concerning this. The Facilities and Real Estate Services department is not in charge of determining what land is used for what purposes. If there are any concerns about this matter, then GAPSA must alert the administration and eventually the President, Provost and

Trustees will decide for what purpose land will be used. The Facilities and Real Estate Services department oversees the university's day-to-day operations. GAPSAs meets with this department concerning lease agreements and management of off-campus housing. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan mentioned that the fountains near the School of Social Policy Practice and the Green Line entrance do not run and that this issue can be discussed at the upcoming meeting with Facilities and Real Estate Services.

### *First Vice Chair's Report*

#### Retreat Update

First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan stated that the original location for the Executive Board retreat is no longer available. However, Mr. Hagan stated that there is another possible location. There are no linens or blankets at the new site, so Executive Board members should bring sleeping bags, cots, pillows, or linens to the retreat. Mr. Hagan suggested that the Executive Board eat out for one meal and cook in for the remaining meals. At the site, there are no cooking supplies such as pots, pans, or plates, so members would need to bring these as well. Transportation will be arranged so that two cars will leave early Friday afternoon or evening and one car will leave later Friday night. Mr. Hagan would appreciate any ideas for Friday night events. Send any agenda or social items to Mr. Hagan so a schedule may be drafted. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim mentioned that the Executive Board should consider any goals to be discussed for the upcoming year. Ms. Kim attended a focus group at the GSE and could run a similar event for the Executive Board to help focus GAPSAs's goals. Some agenda items for the retreat will be individual members' budgets and goals, finalizing the entire budget, the Ivy Summit, and a practice run of the first General Assembly meeting.

#### GradFest Airplane Ticket Winner

The Executive Board decided that the fairest approach in picking a winner would be to utilize a random number generator. There were over one thousand tickets sold.

### *Vice Chair for Professional Students' Report*

Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky was not present.

### *Vice Chair for Research Students' Report*

Vice Chair for Research Students Vicky Doan-Nguyen was not present.

### *Vice Chair for International Students' Report*

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Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan was not present.

*Vice Chair for Equity and Access' Report*

Update on Committee Applications

Vice Chair for Equity and Access Esther Agbaje stated that the committee applications are coming in slowly. Most of the students view the application and leave it unfinished. Ms. Agbaje suggested that students possibly are not aware of the application. Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that the university-wide email has been ready for over one week but has not been distributed yet. Once this email is sent with information on the committee application, Ms. Kotsovos stated more applications should be submitted. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp suggested setting a deadline to encourage students to submit their applications. Ms. Agbaje suggested August 8<sup>th</sup> as a priority for interviews. Vice Chair of Finance Christa Heyward stated that a deadline of August 1<sup>st</sup> may be too early for new students to submit an application. Mr. Rennekamp stated it is difficult to reach new students unless they currently receive GAPSA emails. If these students are not on the listserv, then the students must discover GAPSA on their own.

*Vice Chair for Finance's Report*

Budget Update

Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward will meet individually with each Executive Board member to discuss budget issues.

Women's Center

Ms. Heyward announced that the Women's Center Director has stepped down and the search for a new director begins next week. Ms. Heyward would appreciate any questions or concerns to discuss with potential future directors.

*Vice Chair for Student Life's Report*

DPS Safety Video

Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe announced that the Department of Public Safety will be updating their online video. Ms. Thorpe will star in the video as a representative of GAPSA and will have several lines of script. GAPSA will have control over what topics will be included in this part of the script.

Update on the status of the Housing/Landlord Survey

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Ms. Thorpe will be meeting with Vice Chair of Communications Alex Kotsovos concerning the status of the Housing/Landlord survey.

#### Park(ing) Day Philly

Ms. Thorpe stated that on September 19th, there will be a Philadelphia city-wide initiative called Parking Day. Groups will be taking over city parking spaces and demonstrating alternative uses for this space. To participate, GAPSA would need to choose a suitable metered parking space and submit this information to the Parking Day organizers. The city parking authority will reserve this space for the day; however, the meter would need to be fed throughout the event. The space would need to be staffed by GAPSA members for the entire event. Ms. Thorpe would appreciate any ideas or suggestions for the location and creative use of the parking space. Ideas, photos, or sketches should be submitted by August 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### Dr. Alexander at CAPS

Ms. Thorpe met with Dr. Alexander at the Counseling and Psychological Services center. Former director Dr. Rosenstein has stepped down and Dr. Alexander is the current interim director. CAPS has three locations around campus and the 36<sup>th</sup> street office is expanding to take over the mezzanine level and become one building by the fall semester. CAPS has a student and faculty advisory board but undergraduate students comprise the student members. CAPS is interested in balancing out the student members by including graduate and professional students. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward mentioned that the Health Advisory Board needs graduate and professional student members as well. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that CAPS advisory board information can either be added to the committee application or can be included in the Health Advisory Board's application. Mr. Rennekamp suggested finding out how many students sit on these boards, when do these committees meet, and what the requirements are to sit as a member.

#### Dr. Harkavy at Netter Center

Ms. Thorpe and Mr. Rennekamp met with Dr. Harkavy at the Netter Center to partner together in hosting a day of community service. In addition, the Netter Center can assist GAPSA in creating the Campus Climate Survey. Ms. Thorpe also stated that there is a number of faculty interested in creating with the Netter Center's help interdisciplinary courses that bring together graduate and professional students to work on real world applications.

#### *Vice Chair for Social Activities' Report*

Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that events are posed on the Events section of the GAPSA website. Ms. Kim has confirmed the September events including Strikes and Moshulu. The date for the National Mechanics event has been changed to September 12<sup>th</sup>.

#### *Vice Chair for Student Programs' Report*

Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that the minigolf event was a success despite only one week of ticket sales. The Bike Tour of West Philly will be held this coming Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, and on Saturday, August 2nd there will be a food tour at Reading Terminal Market. The Kayak Tour is confirmed for Sunday, September 28, 2008 from 1:45 PM-4:00PM and tickets will go on sale September 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Philly School of Circus Arts tickets are slightly more expensive than expected. For 24 people, the cost of a private event is 500 dollars plus 20 dollars extra for each additional person. The student-teacher ratio is usually kept at 6 to 1. This event is more athletic and unique as students would be able to try out circus equipment. Ms. Arlt suggested that GAPSAs could host this either for the Executive Board or the General Assembly before hosting an event for the general student body. Ms. Arlt is also planning events such as apple picking, the State Penitentiary Haunted House, and a Longwood Gardens event.

#### *Vice Chair for Communications' Report*

Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that the campus-wide email has been ready for a week and a half and will be distributed in the near future.

Ms. Kotsovos also stated that the Almanac announcement of the GAPSAs Executive Board members will be printed in September. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward announced that the new Graduate Student Center website is out as a beta version with a new calendar to organize events. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that if the GSC cosponsors an event with GAPSAs, the event will be posted on the GSC website. Students can see in real time if tickets to a GSC sponsored event are sold out. GAPSAs Chair Andrew Rennekamp mentioned that some of Ms. Arlt's events are not posted on the GAPSAs website yet.

#### *Vice Chair for Operations' Report*

Vice Chair for Operations Sarah Smith is coordinating room reservations for the fall semester.

#### **Follow-up Questions on Reports**

none

#### **Follow-up Actions on Reports**

None

#### **Special Orders**

GAPSAs Chair Andrew Rennekamp received an email from the Provost concerning the name change of the College of General Studies to the College of Liberal and Professional Studies. However, this

issue is broader than name change. There have been many new degree programs unique to the University that have been added to the College. In addition, the College of Liberal and Professional Studies would include undergraduate education for older adults and pre-professional classes that prepare students for professional programs. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that the word 'Professional' in the name change could be misconstrued as only pertaining to professional schools. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward expressed concern that there is no accreditation oversight to ensure quality education for these new degree programs. Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that the old College of General Studies is not the appropriate name for the programs it represents; however, the College for Liberal and Professional Studies is not necessarily the correct name either. Mr. Rennekamp would appreciate any input concerning this matter.

## **Unfinished Business**

### GA Outing Proposals

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated last meeting for Executive Board members to discuss any new ideas for the GA Outing. The Atlantic City day trip is still a possibility. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt also suggested the Circus event as a team building activity. In addition, dinner can be ordered in and held in the circus school's party room. Ms. Arlt would like to host this event earlier in the semester, perhaps in place of a regularly scheduled GA meeting. GAPSA might need to pay for the entire event as it may be too expensive for GA members. Ms. Arlt will investigate the cost for the 59 members of the GA and the Executive Board to attend. Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe will be attending a meeting this week with Penn Transit and can discuss bus transportation to the circus event.

## **New Business**

### Setting a Date for GradFest 09

Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim reported that the Spirit of Philadelphia boat cruise is only available on two Saturdays in May: May 9<sup>th</sup> and May 16<sup>th</sup>. May 2<sup>nd</sup> is the only date reasonable for GradFest as to not interfere with Penn Relays, Spring Fling, or Alumni Weekend. The law students' finals occur during GradFest, so it was suggested to hold a separate law school event. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan also suggested that that boat cruise event could be held separately from GradFest. However, last year the boat cruise company bumped GAPSA's annual reservation. Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos suggested holding the boat cruise event on a Friday evening since this would not conflict with any other scheduled event. Ms. Kim mentioned that there are other boat cruise alternatives such as the Mississippi River Boat cruise. Mr. Rennekamp suggested the Executive Board should search for other options that could be held the same weekend of GradFest.

### Agenda Items for Ivy Summit 2008

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that the Ivy Summit agenda items need to be finalized in the near future. Every school submits an agenda with important discussion topics. The Ivy Summit is an important forum for graduate students to formulate ideas and upon returning advocate for these issues at their own respective schools. Topics include graduate housing, capital campaign fundraising, transportation and student loan issues. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward can distribute her summary which includes healthcare, community service, and social events. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan mentioned adding part time student concerns. Mr. Rennekamp would appreciate any further agenda items.

#### Should Penn Host the Ivy Summit in 2009?

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp posed the question of whether Penn should host the 2009 Ivy Summit. There is no official rotation schedule, but for the past seven years each summit has been held by a different school. At each summit, the Chairs of the schools meet to decide who will host the event the following year. If the past pattern is followed, it would be Princeton's turn to host. However, Princeton did not attend last year's Ivy Summit. If Princeton does not volunteer to host, then it would be Penn's responsibility to host. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan suggested listing pros and cons of hosting and presenting these to the General Assembly. Traditionally the host school funds the summit; however, it is unclear if the student government or the school's administration pays. The decision for the location of the 2009 Ivy Summit must be made before October.

#### GAPSA-run Campus Climate Survey

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp has begun to create the Campus Climate Survey and distributed a rough copy. Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos mentioned that if the survey results in a great deal of negative feedback, then it is GAPSA's responsibility to address these concerns and notify the administration. If these concerns are not addressed, then it will create a problem for GAPSA. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that the survey must be up front on what GAPSA intends to do and the limitations of GAPSA's influence. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that it is GAPSA's job to discover problems and concerns and notify the administration. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan mentioned that it is important for GAPSA to advocate for groups without a voice. Ms. Arlt stated that many of the current survey questions appear negative and leading or loaded. Ms. Arlt suggested balancing out these types of questions with more positive questions, such as what is going right in the university. Ms. Kim suggested speaking to Shaun Harper who studies campus climates in higher institutions. Mr. Harper could help GAPSA in formatting the survey. Ms. Kim also suggested putting in more GAPSA-related questions, such as if GAPSA programming is helping students adjust to the city of Philadelphia. Ms. Arlt also suggested using the five point question which allows the student to choose from a range of answers such as just right, too big, etc. In addition, the survey could ask similar questions several times to obtain more accurate information from the student. Vice Chair for Communication Alexandra Kotsovos suggested formatting the survey so that if a student answers a question in a particular way, the website would send the student to a different group of questions, but this may be too complicated. Ms. Kim stated that these types of surveys are created by Education Policy. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward mentioned that the university hired a company to put together



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the Senior Exit Survey and Ms. Heyward stated that she could speak with the Dean about creating a survey similar to the Exit Survey. Ms. Arlt suggested if these ideas do not work that surveymonkey.com could be used as long as GAPSAs obtains assistance in phrasing the survey questions. Mr. Rennekamp stated that it would be beneficial to do a pilot study with a General Assembly committee. Ms. Kotsovos stated she could try to put the survey on PennInTouch, but Mr. Rennekamp stated not all students use PennInTouch. Ms. Arlt stated that if GAPSAs surveys only students that are graduating the survey would leave out any student that drops out or leaves the university. Ms. Arlt stated that there are benefits and drawbacks to surveying specific populations and these need to be considered. Mr. Rennekamp said that if GAPSAs does not conduct this Campus Climate survey then no group or entity will.

### **Announcements**

None

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 pm.