
Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting on August 5, 2008

The fifth regularly scheduled meeting of GAPSA Executive Board was convened on August 5, 2008 at 6:05 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, Saurabh Madaan, Mat Abramsky, and Jessica Kim.

Also present via teleconference was: Esther Agbaje.

Absent was: Vicky Doan-Nguyen.

Approval of the Minutes from Prior Meetings

The changes to last meeting's minutes put forth by GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp, Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt and Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim were unanimously approved.

Reports

Chair's Report

Change to the Fall schedule (to accommodate Thanksgiving)

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp noted that an Executive Board meeting had been scheduled for the day before Thanksgiving. The majority of Executive Board members decided to move the meeting to Tuesday, November 25th. However, this date could be changed if closer to the date more members realize they cannot attend.

Ivy Summit Accommodations

Mr. Rennekamp has been researching hotel and flight accommodations for the Ivy Summit. Despite attempting to book early, Mr. Rennekamp was told that the reserved block of hotel rooms was full. However, airfare would only be about 1000 dollars for six people. As for other transportation alternatives, Mr. Rennekamp discovered that the Bolt Bus only runs on the weekends. However, the Chinatown bus could still be a possibility. If air is the chosen mode of transportation, the entire trip including full priced hotel and rental car would be about 2200 dollars. Mr. Rennekamp asked the Executive Board if he should reserve the flights and rental car now. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that it would be a good idea to lock in a reasonable price now for the seats and the car. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward mentioned that at last year's Ivy Summit some schools did not stay at the preferred hotel. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky stated that Harvard is off of a subway line and that hotels near Harvard are expensive. Mr. Abramsky noted that it is cheaper to stay downtown than around Harvard's campus.

24/7 Access to the GSC

Mr. Rennekamp received an email from Anita at the Graduate Student Center inquiring if other Executive Members needed 24/7 access to the GSC. Last year access was granted to the Chair, the Vice Chair for Student Programs and the Vice Chair for Operations. This year, Vice Chair of Operations Sarah Smith, Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim and First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan asked for 24/7 access.

First Vice Chair's Report

First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan stated that he will be meeting with Anita and DeAnna from the GSC on a regular basis to better coordinate events. This will be to keep both GAPSA and the GSC informed as well as preventing any event overlap.

Vice Chair for Professional Students' Report

Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky will be coordinating information for the Professional Students' committees. Vice Chair for Operations Sarah Smith will contact the individual school governments to formulate a list of the new GAPSA representatives so that the Mr. Abramsky and other Executive Board members will know who will be a part of the new General Assembly. Mr. Abramsky volunteered to help Ms. Smith track down the incoming GAPSA representatives.

Vice Chair for Research Students' Report

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

Vice Chair for International Students' Report

International Quizzo

Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan met with Anita from the GSC to discuss how to encourage international students to become more involved socially and academically. An event called International Quizzo could be held beginning in the middle of October and would continue every two weeks. This event would allow American and International students to participate together in a fun and educational event. For example, questions related to regions, cultures, and facts would be asked during the event. Mr. Madaan would like to have GAPSA, GSC and OIP collectively involved to organize, fund, and run this event. International Quizzo would cost approximately 1600 dollars to hold but this could be split between the International and Student Programming budgets.

Publicizing GAPSA Events

Mr. Madaan noted that when GAPSA events are publicized, certain concepts are sometimes not as obvious to international students as they are to American students. For example, the happy hour is an American concept. If this term is unfamiliar, then students may not realize what the event entails. Mr. Madaan suggested including a short, one line description of each publicized event and listing it on flyers and on the website. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp mentioned that the GAPSA website does include descriptions of each event but the Executive Board should review these to ensure their clarity.

Vice Chair for Equity and Access' Report

Update on Committee Applications

Vice Chair for Equity & Access Esther Agbaje suggested instituting a hard deadline for August 29th to ensure students are completing their committee applications in a timely manner. As of this meeting only twenty applications had been completed. Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos has been including information regarding the applications in the weekly GAPSA emails and that the school-wide GAPSA email had already been sent. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stressed the importance of filling the seats on these committees. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt suggested printing out flyers and hanging them up near busy school entrances and inside the GSC. Last year many applications were filled out by students from Wharton and the Law School and the concern is whether the representatives of these schools are forwarding on the GAPSA weekly emails. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward mentioned that last year many incoming students applied for these positions. Ms. Agbaje is considering running phone interviews to help with the selection process. Ms. Arlt suggested that GAPSA partner with Career Services to include committee application information in one of their emails. Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan noted that many students do read the emails from Career Services and these emails are sent out frequently. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan stated that if a hard deadline is implemented, more people will complete the application process. Ms. Heyward also mentioned that she has a list of committee applicants from last year when she served as the GAPSA Vice Chair for Equity and Access and that she would be willing to send an e-mail out to all past applicants informing them of the new application and the August 29th deadline.

Vice Chair for Finance's Report

Budget Update

Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward has been working on the budget but has not received any final numbers from last year's budget. Ms. Heyward asked Executive Board members to document any purchases and forward to her these numbers.

Women's Center

Ms. Heyward is serving on the search committee for a new director of the Women's Center. The first of the interviews was held last week and two more will be held next week. Ms. Heyward suggested that the women of the Executive Board should meet with whomever is selected as the new director to discuss graduate and professional students' issues. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt mentioned that she sits on the Women's Center advisory board and can help out as well.

Vice Chair for Student Life's Report

Penn Transit

Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe met with Penn Transit recently. The entire Penn Transit facility will be relocated in the next year beyond 50th Street. In addition, the facility conducted a ridership survey and discovered that 47% of riders of Penn transportation were graduate students.

First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan asked if there is anything GAPSAs can do for Penn Transit. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated GAPSA could advocate more for Penn Transit funding. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that other universities consider transit as a subdivision of safety, while at Penn, transit is viewed as a profit making entity despite the bus service being free for students. More of Penn Transit's profit comes from parking and not from the buses. Ms. Thorpe suggested bringing up this issue at the Ivy Summit to see how other schools handle transit.

Facilities and Services

Ms. Thorpe and Mr. Rennekamp recently met with the Vice President of Facilities and Real Estate Services (FRES) Anne Papageorge to discuss issues concerning graduate housing. Affordable housing for graduate students has been left out of the PennConnects plan. It was suggested that due to rising construction costs and continuing decline of available affordable housing GAPSA should work with on the stipend perspective. Mr. Rennekamp noted that housing projects cost more since the landlords are improving the existing buildings. Students should be receiving more money in order to afford on-campus housing. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky stated that if the university owns and develops its own housing then it should be able to better control how much everything costs. Mr. Rennekamp stated that anything on campus the university owns and in addition, the university owns land and leases the property to developers to build locations such as Domus. Mr. Abramsky noted that if the leases end on these buildings, then GAPSA should be aware of this and think of new ways to convert them into affordable housing. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that GAPSA should compare Penn to other universities of similar caliber. As of now, the only graduate designated housing is Sansom and there are no graduate family housing options. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward stated that Columbia and Harvard both provide many choices of housing to their graduate students. Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan noted that apartments around Columbia's campus are affordable since Columbia subsidizes the cost. In addition, Mr. Madaan stated that demand for graduate housing is very high since most of Sansom's available accommodation is full by the middle of the summer. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan suggested GAPSA discuss this issue at the Ivy Summit. Mr. Rennekamp stated that on-campus housing will be a main priority for GAPSA this year and the Executive Board will also discuss this further at the Executive Retreat.

Sustainability

Ms. Thorpe also met with the Office of Sustainability. She reported that President Amy Gutmann signed a climate commitment to limit carbon neutrality by 2030. The office would like to have both graduate and undergraduate students represented in this commitment. There will be a campus-wide sustainability survey conducted in the fall which will help craft out a future agenda. The office has an overarching sustainability committee in which two GAPSA representatives sit. In addition, there will be six subcommittees but there are no current requirements that graduate and professional students sit on them. However, there are no limits on the numbers and types of students and people to join the subcommittees. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward has a list of students who applied last year indicating they would like to be involved with the sustainability committees.

New Student Health Facility/Student Health Advisory Board

Ms. Thorpe recently met with Student Health Services and was able to tour the impressive new facility. The Student Health Advisory Board has been inactive over the past few years and SHS wants new student appointees to sit on their advisory board. SHS has specific ideas of what goals they would like to see the committee to accomplish. SHS Director Dr. Evelyn Weiner has specific concerns regarding cultural competencies and awareness of minority needs in health care. Experts in

this issue have not historically been represented on the board and SHS wants this issue to be represented. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt suggested adding a voluntary self-disclosure in the advisory board's application. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward stated that during the interview process the candidate's interest and expertise on this subject may be revealed; however, GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp mentioned that this may not come out in the interview. Ms. Heyward mentioned that if SHS self-recruits then the applicants may mostly be undergraduates.

SHIAC

Ms. Thorpe met with the Student Health Insurance Advisory Committee and announced that the SHIAC minutes which were previously private would now be publicly accessible. Ms. Thorpe stated that the minutes should now be hosted on the SHIAC website but GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp was not able to access a visible link to the minutes. Ms. Thorpe stated she would find where the link's location is so that GAPSA could link to the SHIAC minutes via the GAPSA website. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky mentioned that last year's SHIAC survey was difficult to finish due to the fact that there were too many ways to answer each question. Mr. Abramsky suggested that SHIAC could improve their survey for this coming year.

Vice Chair for Social Activities' Report

August and September Events

Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim announced that the August and September social events can be found on the GAPSA website. This Thursday there is a happy hour at Chickie's and Pete's. On August 12th at 6pm, there will be the Live Arts happy hour at National Mechanics. There will be karaoke starting at 9pm and attendees will be able to stay for this. During the event, Live Arts will project promotional clips and hand out brochures of the Live Arts Festival. On August 29th will be the Phillies game versus the Nationals. On August 23rd, there will be Parenting 101, a new musical, held at the Kimmel Center. Also on August 23rd will be a Ride the Ducks trip. Sunday, August 24th will be the sold out Spamalot musical and the Live Jazz and Champagne brunch at the Art Museum. September 3rd will kick off the annual happy hour at Strikes which will last from 7-10pm. Afterwards, there will be the Live Arts Festival which will include a free drink at the bar and a show called The European Lesson. The Atlantic City trip's time has changed to 5pm-2am but the times are currently tentative. The location will most likely be at the Tropicana. Every passenger will receive 15 dollars. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan suggested placing a disclaimer on flyers and on the website noting when the bus will leave from Atlantic City. In addition, Mr. Hagan suggested providing a map and a list of points of interest. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky suggested adding to the disclaimer that if passengers would like to leave Atlantic City before the scheduled bus times, then they would have to find transportation on their own. Ms. Kim also announced that the annual Moshulu event will take place on September 25th from 10-1.30am. The Phillies game with the private pre-party will take place on September 27th. Mr. Abramsky suggested uploading all of this events information onto Google Calendar in order to merge personal calendars with the GAPSA events calendar.

Update on Spring Boat Cruise

The Spirit of Philadelphia Boat Cruise is unavailable on May 2nd. Ms. Kim spoke with the president of the Liberty Bell but the availability of the boat on May 2nd is under dispute. The Liberty Bell may not renew its Penn's Landing docking permit after this October. If it does not dock in Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell's location is 30 minutes away and it would be too difficult to charter 500 people to

Burlington, NJ. Since there are only two companies that hold cruises on the Delaware River, no alternatives exist. Ms. Kim stated that GAPSA could hold a boat cruise event but not necessarily in collaboration with GradFest and this event could take place in the fall. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward suggested holding a Graduate Student Appreciation Week and the culmination could be the Boat Cruise on May 9th. Ms. Kim stated this could also be held on May 1st.

Vice Chair for Student Programs' Report

Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt announced that the Philly Fun Fridays have wrapped up for the summer. The GAPSA events all sold out but the GSC events did not. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward stated that current events are no longer being put in the weekly emails and it has been saying 'no new events.' However, the email directs students to the GAPSA website. Ms. Heyward suggested putting the event titles in the weekly email and having a link to the event's description. Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated she was previously told not to list every event in the weekly emails. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan suggested creating a Google Calendar that can automatically insert into a personal calendar. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that last year GAPSA had a Google Calendar and it did not work well. Ms. Arlt stated that she has not seen a decrease in attendance for GAPSA events despite the email change. The Schuylkill River Kayak Tour will be held on September 28th and tickets go on sale September 3rd. Ms. Arlt is currently organizing a haunted house trip and a pumpkin picking event. The Longwood Gardens Treehouse Exhibit ends October 3rd and transportation may not be organized in time for this event. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that Longwood Gardens holds a winter holiday display and that this could be an alternative event.

Vice Chair for Communications' Report

Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos recently met to discuss the GAPSA Off-Campus Living Survey which will list off-campus landlords. The GAPSA website will also be redone for free and will be hosted on a different server and content manager. This will cost 10 dollars a month with an American company compared to previously 40 dollars a month with an Australian company. Ms. Kotsovos also suggested having a calendar of GAPSA events instead of a list. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky suggested finding whether there exists a script to run Google Calendar on the website. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward stated that if events are listed in the weekly emails then students would skip down to read about events that interest them. Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan stated that he only receives an email bundle periodically and past events are usually listed as well. Mr. Abramsky noted that some GAPSA representatives put the emails on a Google listserv and the student's personal settings cause this problem. Ms. Kotsovos stated that it is the representatives' job to forward out the weekly emails in a timely manner. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that if events are selling out then students are discovering the events. Ms. Arlt stated that at the Taste of Philly, for example, many schools were represented. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim noted that most of the students at social events come from the School of Medicine and Wharton. Mr. Abramsky suggested that the GAPSA representatives should cc a dummy email account to ensure the emails are sent out in the correct format. Ms. Heyward stated that when she served as a GAPSA representative that she needed authorization to send emails to other BGS students. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt suggested getting the schools to sign students up for the GAPSA weekly emails. Ms. Kotsovos suggested letting the students subscribe to the weekly emails and discontinue forwarding the emails. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated GAPSA should create a group for students to subscribe to if they never receive the weekly email from their representatives. Mr. Abramsky noted that this would

save the representatives time. Ms. Heyward noted that the schools may need to authorize access to do this. Ms. Kotsovos suggested sending out emails biweekly. Mr. Madaan suggested creating an account to view the cc emails and single out the problem as opposed to changing the weekly email system.

Vice Chair for Operations' Report

Vice Chair for Operations Sarah Smith has been in contact with Audrey from Perelman Quadrangle and all General Assembly locations have been confirmed. Only on October 22nd will there be a more difficult arrangement of theater style seating. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt suggested holding the GA Circus event on this date. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp suggested that Ms. Smith reserve the theater style room for October 22nd as a back up plan.

Follow- up Questions on Reports

None

Follow-up Actions on Reports

None

Special Orders

Retreat Agenda

First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan assigned GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp and himself to finalize the retreat agenda. Mr. Hagan assigned Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim and Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward to be in charge of food. Mr. Hagan also assigned Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky, Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan and Ms. Kim to be in charge of retreat social activities. Mr. Rennekamp stated that Friday night will be social but Saturday and part of Sunday will be productive; however, there will be time for socializing on Saturday as well. Mr. Hagan suggested each Executive Board member bring a hard copy prepared budget and any important supporting documents. Mr. Rennekamp stated that large issues such as housing, budget proposal, and transit will be discussed. In addition, an agenda for the University Council needs to be set and GAPSA proposals for the Steering Committee need to be listed. Planning for the first General Assembly meeting and GA goals need to be set at the retreat. If there is time, the G12 meeting, Orientation for Committee Appointees and Town Hall Meetings will also be discussed at the retreat. Mr. Abramsky suggested adding an Executive Board follow-up meeting after the retreat. Mr. Rennekamp suggested September 2nd as an additional date. Ms. Heyward suggested bringing the projector to the retreat and Ms. Kim suggested a large post-it flip chart. Mr. Hagan will bring hard copies of important documents including the GAPSA Constitution. Mr. Abramsky suggested also bringing the Mandate of Committees document.

Last-Minute Retreat Logistics

Mr. Hagan stated that the homeowner of the previous location choice broke the lease but the new retreat site will be larger and cost less. The location will provide sheets but not comforters. There is

a washing machine but members will need to bring their own toiletries and towels. Mr. Hagan suggested bringing pillows and a sleeping bag to use as a comforter. Mr. Hagan stated that there will be two cars in addition to a rental car. Without Friday traffic, the drive to the site takes about 1.5 hours.

Unfinished Business

GA outing to the Circus School (finalize date, transportation etc)

Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt has been in contact with the Circus Arts School. Ms. Arlt handed out a sample cost breakdown which included working with the instructors 10-15 minutes on each activity, a group team and trust building activity, and a performance. However, if GAPSAs purchases outside food, the school will still charge 25% of the food cost to accommodate it. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim suggested upon return to campus to organize a dinner. Vice Chair for Student Life reported that Penn Transit will waive all extra fees for use of their bus for this event. GAPSAs Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that the fees for the event are reasonable but asked to negotiate to hold the event on a Wednesday night during normal GA meeting times. There is concern over participation if the event is not held on a Wednesday.

Campus Climate Survey - how should we proceed?

This discussion was tabled for the next meeting.

Finalize the Date for GradFest (May 2, 2009)

The date for GradFest was finalized and will be held on May 2nd.

New Business

Should GAPSAs participate in the Penn yearbook?

This discussion was tabled for the next meeting.

Announcements

None

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm.