
Minutes of the General Assembly Meeting on September 24, 2008

The second regularly scheduled meeting of GAPSA General Assembly was convened on September 24, 2008 at 7:50 PM in the Golkin Room in Houston Hall.

Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

Present were: Andrew Rennekamp, Alejandro Hagan, Mat Abramsky, Christa Heyward, Nikki Thorpe, Alexandra Kotsovos, Christina Arlt, Jessica Kim, Natalie Williams, Sarah Smith, Susan Haas, Carla Cue, Leslie Warden, Tim Shokair, Wenting Li, Amy Fuller, Allison Sullivan, Jacob Uriel, Jill Harrison, Alexander Balloon, Chrissy Caggiano, Heather Curl, Stephanie Wujcik, Maher Zamel, Olga Shebonova, Omar Khan, Swathi Madaiah, Lee Solomon, Jacqui Simonet, Johanna Busch, Jeff Neal, David Guttman, Kamila Alexander, Joceyln Blaisdell, Esther Pinkston, Jonathan Lukens, Tom Byrne, David Vafek, Henry Friedman, Aleksander Baranski, Anthony Willis, Charles Xie, Maria Yuan, and Micky Hervitz.

Quorum was declared.

Approval of the Minutes from Prior Meeting

The changes to last meeting's minutes put forth by GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp were unanimously approved.

Reports

Chair's Report

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp reminded everyone to take a GAPSA GA handbook and new inserts for the Deputy Vice Chair and University Committee appointees pages. In addition, copies of the proposed budget were made available.

Mr. Rennekamp also referred the Assembly to the GAPSA September 24, 2008 University Council status report which can be found online: <http://www.gapsa.upenn.edu/meetings/reports>

Appointment of a Parliamentarian

Mr. Rennekamp announced that the Executive Board appointed Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky as the GAPSA Parliamentarian for the year. There were no objections to this. Mr. Abramsky stated that at every meeting he will introduce more concerning Robert's Rules. Mr. Abramsky directed the General Assembly members to page 45 of the GA Handbook. Robert's Rules dictates how a meeting flows and how it is structured. If used properly, Robert's Rules are very efficient. Mr. Abramsky stated that he will assist Mr. Rennekamp in ensuring the Rules are followed. Robert's Rules, however, operates under the assumption that everyone is familiar with the Rules. Pages 35-40 of the GA Handbook lists information concerning motions, calls to action, etc. Mr. Abramsky noted that the most important aspect is quorum and there is a strict 100% quorum rule.

GAPSA, however, requires that if a representative must be absent from a meeting, the seat must be filled by a proxy, and this information must be sent to Vice Chair for Operations Sarah Smith prior to the meeting. Mr. Abramsky stressed that it is mandatory for the GA representatives to be present at GA meetings and that all seats must be filled. Mr. Abramsky stated that GA meeting agendas will follow a similar format to this meeting's agenda. In order to pass policy, motions are used. If a representative wishes to present a motion and this addition is within the order of the day, i.e. new business or related to a presentation, the Chair may recognize the representative. Then the representative may present a motion. A motion requires someone to second, and any person present may second a motion. If the motion is substantive, then there is a debate concerning the motion. A speakers' list is used during the debate and names will be called in order. When it is a representative's turn to speak, then the representative may speak for a short amount of time. After all comments are heard or someone asks for the motion to be called, then there is a vote. Mr. Abramsky stated that he is looking forward to keeping meetings on time and on topic. Mr. Rennekamp thanked Mr. Abramsky. Mr. Rennekamp added that Robert's Rules are used in order to ensure that every person is allowed to speak and everyone is heard. If any person feels that the use of Robert's Rules is a hindrance or if anyone is unsure of how to proceed with the Rules, the person may say 'Point of inquiry,' and either Mr. Abramsky or Mr. Rennekamp will address this. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the Rules should not prevent people from speaking even if the person does not understand the Rules.

First Vice Chair's Report

First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan stated that he would like to make a motion to form a GradFest Ad Hoc Committee. Mr. Hagan stated that this would be discussed later in the meeting agenda.

Vice Chair for Professional Students' Report

Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky stated that his Professional Council meeting was very productive and more details will be discussed at the next GA meeting.

Vice Chair for Research Students' Report

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that there are currently two nominees for the open Vice Chair for Research Students position. Susan Haas from the Annenberg School of Communication and Jonathan Lukens from the School of Social Policy will be running in the election held on October 8th. Additional nominees can be given to the Vice Chair for Equity & Access Esther Agbaje up until the start of the election.

Vice Chair for International Affairs' Report

Interim Vice Chair for International Affairs Natalie Williams had nothing to report. Mr. Rennekamp stated that there will also be an election to fill the vacant Vice Chair for International Affairs position. Ms. Williams has been nominated and will run in this election. Additional nominees can be given to the Vice Chair for Equity & Access Esther Agbaje up until the start of the election.

Vice Chair for Equity and Access' Report

Vice Chair for Equity and Access Esther Agbaje was not present.

Vice Chair for Student Life's Report

Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe convened the first Student Life Policy Council on Monday. The meeting had a large attendance and was very productive with brainstorming sessions to formulate priorities. Ms. Thorpe stated that there will be more to report as the year progresses. Ms. Thorpe stated that many of the University Committees have been filled but the Housing Committee is still in need of appointees. Ms. Thorpe requests that if anyone is interested in sitting on this committee to contact her. Ms. Thorpe noted that GAPSA is holding a Townhall meeting before the October 22nd GA meeting and requested that everyone help publicize this event. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the GA meeting will be shortened to accommodate this and that all GAPSA members are required to attend the Townhall meeting.

Vice Chair for Finance's Report

Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward noted that it is the responsibility of the General Assembly representatives to email to their constituents the weekly emails. Ms. Heyward also stated that the Finance Committee had its first meeting and there will be more to report at the next GA meeting.

Vice Chair for Social Activities' Report

Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that there are seven graduate schools represented on her Social Activities committee which will be working on planning the GAPSA annual Halloween event. Ms. Kim stated that the Moshulu Annual Meet and Greet will be held tomorrow night, September 25th. There are 300 tickets available for the Phillies game on Saturday, September 27th. On October 5th there will be a Dock Street Happy Hour. Tickets go on sale next week for the November 1st Atlantic City day trip. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp noted that these events are also posted on the GAPSA website. Ms. Kim stated that students can go to the Graduate Student Center website to see if tickets to an event are still available. Mr. Rennekamp asked Ms. Kim to explain more about the Moshulu event. Ms. Kim stated that GAPSA rents out a boat on the Delaware River to host one of the largest events of the year. Typically 1200 people attend and tickets are free to the first 300 to arrive. This event allows Penn students to dance, drink and mingle to kick off a new semester with new friends. Despite the chance of inclement weather, Ms. Kim stated that there are covered areas at the Moshulu event. GAPSA Representative Jill Harrison asked the date of the Halloween event. Ms. Kim stated that the Halloween event will be held on Thursday, October 30th. The Social Activities committee decided to not compete with any other events that may occur on Friday, October 31st.

Vice Chair for Student Programs' Report

Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that this Saturday, September 27th is the Schuylkill River Kayak trip. Since this kayak trip's tickets sold out in six minutes, Ms. Arlt is planning a second kayak trip on October 19th. The Eastern State Penitentiary's Terror Behind the Walls trip is scheduled for October 3rd. This event is sold out but someone may have sold back 3 tickets. On October 11th is the sold out Linvilla Orchards trip. Ms. Arlt announced that she met with her Student Programs Committee and it discussed many great ideas for future events.

Vice Chair for Communications' Report

Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos announced that the new GAPSAs website will be running in the near future and that ISC is configuring it. The web address will not be changing.

Vice Chair for Operations' Report

Vice Chair for Operations Sarah Smith asked that the GA Certification of Appointment and Intake Forms be filled out and turned into her by the end of the meeting.

Follow-up Questions on Reports

GAPSAs Chair Andrew Rennekamp asked that any member who speaks introduce themselves so that Ms. Smith may include their name in the minutes.

Follow-up Action on Reports

Approval of Deputy Vice Chairs

Mr. Rennekamp stated that the Executive Board would like to appoint the following individuals as Deputy Vice Chairs, pending approval by the General Assembly: Deputy Vice Chair Anthony Youngblood; Deputy Vice Chair for Communications Jill Varriale; Deputy Vice Chair for Equity and Access Pradhira Bajaj; Deputy Vice Chair for Social activities Tim Shokair; Deputy Vice Chair for Student Life Pierre Gooding; Deputy Vice Chair for Student Programs Dukyoung Lee; and Deputy Vice Chair for Student Programs Stephanie Wujcik. GAPSAs representative Leslie Warden motioned to approve the Deputy Vice Chairs. Jonathan Lukens seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Proposed Budget for FY2009

Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward stated that according to Article VIII.A.2, "Prior to the second scheduled General Assembly meeting of the fall semester, the Vice Chair for Finance shall propose a final budget to be approved by the General Assembly. No GAPSAs funds may be spent after that date without General Assembly approval of a budget." Ms. Heyward distributed copies of the proposed budget at the previous GA meeting and handed out copies again at this GA meeting. GAPSAs Chair Andrew Rennekamp asked if there were any questions concerning the proposed budget. GAPSAs representative Alexander Balloon noted a

typo in the title “Chair’s Discretionary Funds.’ Mr. Rennekamp noted the typo. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky asked to speak in favor of the proposed budget motioned to approve the budget. Mr. Abramsky asked Ms. Heyward to explain the reason the Vice Chair for Professional Students’ budget is one-third the budget of the Vice Chair for Research Students. Ms. Heyward explained that this occurs due to historical purposes. In the past, there existed two student governments. One government was strictly for PhD students - The Graduate Association Council (GSAC) - and the other (GAPSA) included all graduate and professional students. When the two governments merged, some of the GSAC expenses were grandfathered in as a stipulation of the merger. GSAC also had a surplus which has now become part of the Research Council’s budget for Research Student Travel Grants. The Vice Chair for Research Students’ budget funds \$15,000 for the Graduate Student Center to run the Navigation Series. The previous Ph.D. student government (GSAC) negotiated with the Office of the Provost matching travel grant funds for research students. The \$40,000 is equal to the \$20,000 given by GAPSA and the \$20,000 given by the Office of the Provost. The rest of the Vice Chair for Research Students’ budget is merit requests. Mr. Rennekamp noted that there has been a dramatic increase in funding to the Professional Council and professional travel grants, which did not exist even three years ago. GAPSA will ask the Office of the Provost to match the funding given for professional student travel grants. The Professional Council will begin its second year of existence and plan events that will require funding. Since the Research Council has technically existed longer, they have been more vocal in requests for funding. GAPSA representative Henry Friedman asked the reason allocation of funding to school governments has changed in the past year. Ms. Heyward explained that the University’s funding allocation system has changed. Before this year, PhD students 5 years or less into their program, School of Arts and Sciences students 3 years or less into their program, and all professional students paid the general fee. However, all students pay a general fee and thus a significant number of SAS students are paying now that did not pay before, and the percentages given to each school have changed. Mr. Rennekamp explained that GAPSA receives funding from the general fees and operates under a fair funding model. The professional students are now paying less into the general fee and therefore pay a lesser percentage of the total general fee amount. The Wharton School was a proponent of this funding change as their students pay more into the general fee and had not been receiving an equitable distribution. SAS is larger in population than Wharton, but Wharton pays more into the general fee in total. This is the reason SAS does not receive more funding than Wharton. Ms. Heyward noted that the students more than 5 years into their program pay one quarter of the general fee, but the majority of Wharton students pay 100% of the general fee. There are more SAS students but they all do not pay the same general fee amount. GAPSA representative Tim Shokair motioned to approve the proposed FY2009 budget. GAPSA representative Alexander Balloon seconded. The budget passes unanimously.

Standing Committees

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp announced that the Executive Board would like to introduce and add two ad hoc committees. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan put forth a motion to add the GradFest Committee as a Standing Committee. Mr. Rennekamp added that a Campus Climate Survey Committee would also be added and GAPSA representative Lee Solomon volunteered to chair this committee. Mr. Rennekamp entertained a motion to approve adding the GradFest Committee and the Campus Climate Survey Committee as GAPSA ad hoc committees. GAPSA representative Jacqui Simonet motioned. GAPSA representative Chrissy Caggiano seconded. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat

Abramsky asked what would be the most appropriate format for these committees. Mr. Abramsky suggested including a postmortem of GradFest08 and postponing creation of a standing committee until the next GA meeting. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that GradFest is the large, annual, one-day event for graduate students. Events held by the University do not reflect graduate students and their families. In the past, GradFest attendance has been over 1000 people, which is approximately 10% of the total graduate student population. At GradFest, there is a carnival, inflatable, food, entertainment, and school funshops. Mr. Hagan agreed with Mr. Abramsky and stated there should be a discussion of GradFest but stressed the importance of a GradFest committee. GAPSA representative Leslie Warden agreed as GradFest requires a great deal of commitment. Ms. Warden suggested creating a committee to analyze GradFest08 data and present this data to the General Assembly. GAPSA representative Susan Haas asked if there is a reason the GradFest Committee could do this even if the committee were ad hoc. Ms. Haas also asked how difficult it is to change a standing committee once it has been approved. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the motion on the floor is to create an ad hoc only committee for this academic year. Standing Committees exist every year. The ad hoc committees would meet at the same time as the Standing Committees. The ad hoc committees would not be renewed next year without a vote from the General Assembly. Mr. Rennekamp stated if there is no further discussion, then there would be a call to question. Mr. Rennekamp asked for all those in favor to create the two ad hoc committees for this academic year only for GradFest and the Campus Climate Survey. GAPSA representative Leslie Warden asked for a friendly amendment to charge the committee with their first task in analyzing GradFest08 data. Mr. Rennekamp stated that a motion cannot be amended once it has been called. GAPSA representative Alexander Balloon asked to return to the motion. Mr. Rennekamp stated the question is whether or not there should exist a GradFest committee? GAPSA representative Henry Friedman seconded Mr. Balloon's motion. The motion was unanimously passed. Mr. Rennekamp asked for discussion concerning the Campus Climate Survey Committee. Mr. Friedman stated that the responsibility of conducting this survey should fall under the Vice Chair for Communications. Mr. Friedman stated that there would be no need for a separate Survey Committee. GAPSA representative Lee Solomon stated that is GAPSA's responsibility to discover how students feel about their school environment. Mr. Solomon stated that the Vice Chair for Communications could take charge of this, but the role of the Vice Chair for Communications is more of a public relations role. Interim Vice Chair for International Affairs Natalie Williams asked for a point of clarification whether the Climate Survey would be for everyone or only for students. Mr. Solomon stated that the survey would only be for students. Mr. Balloon stated that GAPSA should study existing streams of data collection for campus climate so that nothing is repeated. Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that there exists a climate survey directed at outgoing undergraduate seniors. Ms. Kotsovos stated that creating and running a climate survey is a huge undertaking and would need more help than one Executive Board member. Ms. Kotsovos stated that for the Vice Chair for Communications to solely head the climate survey would not be the most effective method. The survey must be meaningful and professional and running it would not fall under any one Vice Chair. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that some institutions outsource the tasks of creating and running these types of surveys. Ms. Kim stated that a Campus Climate Survey Committee could educate itself on what topics should be included in a survey directed at graduate students. Mr. Friedman stated that he did not see the benefits of conducting a climate survey. Mr. Friedman stated that the GAPSA representatives should be responsible for having their own segment survey for their constituents. GAPSA representative Susan Haas gave examples of information that could be discovered through a climate survey: the need for after-school care, places to take a sick child, rent increase issues, aging demographics of graduate students,

affordability of health insurance. Ms. Haas stated that GAPSA would be the appropriate entity to run the climate survey. If the issues are not quantified, then with the magnitude of complaints, each person will be a single complainer. GAPSA representative Jacob Uriel stated that the scope of the survey may not be as detailed. Mr. Uriel stated that it is not realistic to discover all of the problems that exist on campus, but having some data would be useful. First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan stated that GAPSA represents the graduate and professional students and the Campus Climate Survey would give GAPSA the insight into real problems and concrete data to present to the administration and advocate for student needs. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky asked through the Chair whether Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim could create a presentation on the Campus Climate Survey to present to the General Assembly at the next meeting. Ms. Kim stated she could create a presentation but it may not be ready for the next GA meeting. Mr. Friedman emphasized that the average attrition rate is 50% and there is a need to discover the reason graduate and professional students drop out of their programs. It is important for GAPSA to know specific concerns that face students and the quality of data that is missing. GAPSA representative Olga Shebonova stated that the survey is important and hiring a professional to create the survey questions and analyze the data may be the more professional option. Mr. Friedman moved to amend the motion and make the Campus Climate Survey Committee an ad hoc committee. Mr. Rennekamp ruled the motion out of order because the main motion already states this. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward stated that GAPSA could not afford to hire a professional to create and run the Climate Survey and that the administration is not interested in running its own climate survey. Ms. Heyward stated this is the reason GAPSA must take charge of this survey. GAPSA representative Tom Byrne stated that this discussion was not relevant to the motion on the floor. Mr. Byrne called to question. Mr. Uriel seconded. The motion was to create an ad hoc committee titled Campus Climate Exploratory Survey chaired by GAPSA rep Lee Solomon. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the Standing Committee meetings the GA representatives attended tonight will be the representatives' assigned committees. Mr. Rennekamp would like to speak with those members who arrived late concerning this.

Appointees to the University Council

Mr. Rennekamp stated that there are a few graduate and professional schools that have not named a representative to the University Council. Mr. Rennekamp requested a motion for have a five minute breakout session for those schools to choose a representative. GAPSA representative Alexander Balloon moved to have the breakout session after the GA meeting adjourned. Mr. Balloon also suggested that these schools email the representatives' names to Mr. Rennekamp within 24 hours. GAPSA representative Leslie Warden seconded. Mr. Rennekamp called for discussion. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward asked for a point of clarification saying that the University Council website states that proxies are not allowed at any University Council meeting. Mr. Rennekamp confirmed this. The University Council advises the administration and consists of members from undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, and also the President, the Provost, and the Secretary. There are twelve representatives, one from each of the graduate and professional schools, and three Executive Board members that sit on the University Council. The Council meets once a month and the meetings are on Wednesdays at 4pm. Mr. Rennekamp stated that if there are no objections, there will be a call to question. The motion passes unanimously.

List of Appointees for the University Committees

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that the nominees to the University Committees must be approved by the General Assembly, and requested a motion to approve the 2008-2009 appointees to University committees with the exception of the Graduate Council of the Faculties because there is currently there is no Vice Chair for Research Students and this impacts who will be a representative on the Graduate Council of the Faculties, as one of the representatives must be a student at the School of Arts and Sciences. GAPSA representative Henry Friedman motioned. GAPSA representative Leslie Warden seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Focus Issues for the General Assembly

Mr. Rennekamp asked to table this until the next meeting. With unanimous consent this item was tabled.

Announcements

Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt announced that there will be an off-campus General Assembly team building activity held on Saturday, October 4th. There will be bus transportation provided and everyone will be leaving at 2pm and returning to campus at 5pm. Food will be provided. Attendance is mandatory. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky asked whether to wear running shoes to this event. Ms. Arlt stated that comfortable clothing should be worn to this event. Attendees will not be getting dirty but will be asked to remove their shoes. If for some reason a member cannot attend, he/she should notify Ms. Arlt.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 pm.