
Minutes of the General Assembly Meeting on November 5, 2008

The fourth regularly scheduled meeting of GAPSA General Assembly was convened on November 5, 2008 at 7:44 PM in Bodek Lounge in Houston Hall.

Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

Present were: Andrew Rennekamp, Alejandro Hagan, Jonathan Lukens, Christa Heyward, Nikki Thorpe, Christina Arlt, Jessica Kim, Esther Agbaje, Omar Khan, Sarah Smith, Heidi Khaled, Leslie Warden, Tim Shokair, Wenting Li, Stephanie Milk, Allison Sullivan, Jacob Uriel, Jill Harrison, Christie Chavez, Chrissy Caggiano, Heather Curl, Stephanie Wujcik, Maher Zamel, Olga Shebonova, Majesh Abraham, Jason Parris, Yoonjee Kim, Lynn Yang, Raffaele Turco, Lee Solomon, Jacqui Simonet, Johanna Busch, David Guttman, Corbett Brown, Casey Bohrman, Tom Byrne, David Vafek, Henry Friedman, Anthony Willis, and Micky Hervitz.

Quorum was declared.

Robert's Rules Quick Fact

Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky introduced a quick fact concerning Robert's Rules. A member may interrupt a meeting if one of the following situations occur. Mr. Abramsky stated the first situation is called a "Point of Order." This is a question concerning how the meeting is proceeding and is directed towards the Chair. Another situation is called "Call for the Order of the Day" and is used when a member thinks the meeting has strayed from the agenda. A "Point of Personal Privilege" concerns questioning the surrounding physical situation, such as the room's temperature or some other urgent matter.

Mr. Abramsky also stated that if a motion with multiple items is being called, a member is permitted to ask that each clause of the motion be voted upon separately. This is called a motion to "Divide the Motion."

The use of a "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry" is encouraged if a member is unsure of Robert's Rules and wants to ask the Chair a question about the rules.

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 stated that the Executive Board met with President Amy Guttmann, the Associate Provost for Education, and the Trustees. The Executive Board has

been active in talking to the administration concerning issues in which GAPSA is interested. Mr. Rennekamp stated that this year's GAPSA focus issues will be formally set later in the meeting. Mr. Rennekamp noted that further information can be found in the GAPSA Executive Board meeting minutes, which are posted online.

Mr. Rennekamp stated that a letter of resignation from Vice Chair for Communications Alexandra Kotsovos has been received and accepted. A special election will be held to fill this position.

Mr. Rennekamp stated that several members of the Executive Board attended the Ivy Summit for graduate school leaders from the Ivy League institutions and MIT. A great deal of valuable information was collected concerning housing information and other issues. Mr. Rennekamp stated that if any member is working on a specific issue or problem and is in need of data from other schools, that he or she should ask the Executive Board for this information. If this data is not currently available, the Executive Board has contacts within the other schools that can find this information.

First Vice Chair's Report

First Vice Chair Alejandro had nothing to report.

Vice Chair for Professional Students' Report

Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky had nothing to report.

Vice Chair for Research Students' Report

Vice Chair for Research Students Jonathan Lukens stated that a record number of research student Travel Grants were approved by the Research Council.

Vice Chair for International Affairs' Report

Vice Chair for International Affairs Omar Khan had nothing to report.

Vice Chair for Equity and Access' Report

Vice Chair for Equity and Access Esther Agbaje had nothing to report.

Vice Chair for Student Life's Report

Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe stated that twenty additional graduate and professional students attended the GAPSA Townhall meeting. Ms. Thorpe reported that graduate and professional students value proximity to campus, convenience, price, and community when choosing a place to live. There was a great sense of the need for community and living in close proximity to other students. Issues concerning better

information and communication concerning housing options were highlighted during the Townhall meeting. The Office of Off Campus Living has a website but the resources available from this need to be more easily available. The Student Life Policy Council is working on this issue and will create a housing report to give to the administration concerning the issues discussed and plans of action. The notes from the Townhall meeting will be made available online.

Vice Chair for Finance's Report

Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward stated an update on the current GAPSA budget will be available at the next General Assembly meeting.

Vice Chair for Social Activities' Report

Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that the GAPSA sponsored Law School Happy Hour will occur on November 6th from 5-7pm. GAPSA Representative Lynn Yang stated that the happy hour would be located at "the Goat" in the Law School and that everyone should enter on the Sansom Street side of the building. There will also be a happy hour at Tinto Restaurant on November 11th from 6-7pm, and GAPSA and SP2 will sponsor a Happy Hour on November 13th at the Carriage House off of Locust Walk and 39th Street. Ms. Heyward stated that the Carriage House is across the street from the Dental School behind the Civic House. The GAPSA Black and White Formal event is scheduled for November 21st and tickets are now on sale for \$30 at the Graduate Student Center. There will be a dinner, open bar, and dancing in the bar lounge area, rather than the soul food café of Miss Tootsies. The dress for this event is black, white, or black and white but can be black tie as well.

Vice Chair for Student Programs' Report

Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that the indoor rock climbing event sold out and there are plans to hold another event next semester. The GAPSA Pie Tasting for Charity event will be held from 11-1:30 on November 12th and 13th at the Graduate Student Center. Pie tastings will be \$0.25 per piece. There is also a tree planting event with UC Green on November 15th. Dinner at Roy's Hawaiian Fusion Restaurant will be on November 17th and tickets for \$20 will go on sale November 10th. On November 19th, there will be an event at the Institute of Contemporary Art called "Talking Pictures," which will be an exhibition tour and free wine and cheese reception. In addition, there will be a volunteering event at the Ronald McDonald House. On December 4th, there will be a trip to see "Hairspray" the musical.

Vice Chair for Communications' Report

Online Ticketing

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that GAPSA is beginning to sell some event tickets online with the vendor, ticketleap.com. The system is being tested by ticketing at the free rock climbing event. To obtain a ticket, a student must log on, enter their information, print out a receipt, and bring this to the event. In the future this system will be used for purchasing

tickets as well. This is an advantage as students can obtain and purchase tickets from anywhere in the world, easing the workload on the Graduate Student Center.

Landlord Survey

Mr. Rennekamp stated that GAPSA will be transferring the Landlord Survey from the Office of Off Campus Living website to the GAPSA website. GAPSA will host this survey and generate reports and gather landlord ratings. The reports cannot be made public yet as there is not enough data. Mr. Rennekamp encouraged everyone to enter in their own landlord survey data; however, individuals may only submit an entry once every three months.

Vice Chair for Operations' Report

Vice Chair for Operations Sarah Smith had nothing to report.

Ad Hoc Committee for the Campus Climate Survey

GAPSA representative Lee Solomon had nothing to report.

Ad Hoc Committee for GradFest

First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan stated that the GradFest Committee is always looking for new members and if anyone is interested to notify him.

Follow-up Questions on Reports

GAPSA Representative Henry Friedman asked if GAPSA pays someone to maintain the website. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the Office of Off Campus Living is paying someone who has been helping GAPSA set up the GAPSA website at no cost to GAPSA. Once the Landlord Survey is posted, then the website will be self-sufficient. Mr. Friedman stated that at the Research Council meeting, it was decided that applications for travel grants should be made available online. Ms. Heyward stated that this duty should be handled by the Vice Chair for Communications position. Mr. Rennekamp stated that one idea is to have travel grant applications be created using the GAPSA surveymonkey.com account.

Follow-up Actions on Reports

Call for Nominations for Vice Chair for Communications

Mr. Rennekamp called on Vice Chair for Equity and Access Esther Agbaje for a call for nominations for the Vice Chair for Communications. Ms. Agbaje announced that a special election will be held on November 19th and any graduate or professional student can accept or receive a nomination. At the meeting before the election begins, students may be nominated. Ms. Agbaje will be accepting nominations until the day of the election at 7:30pm.

Approval of Recent Committee Appointments

Mr. Rennekamp called on Ms. Agbaje to present the newest University Committee appointments. Ms. Agbaje stated that five more people have been nominated for seats on University Committees. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the new handouts list includes the new members except for GAPSA Representative Majesh Abraham who will sit on the Housing and Conferences Services Advisory Board . GAPSA representative Leslie Warden motioned to approve these new nominees. GAPSA Representative Heather Curl seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Old Business

Consideration of 2008-2009 Focus Issues for the General Assembly

Mr. Rennekamp stated that once the focus issues are adopted by the General Assembly, they will become public record. The topics brought up by the General Assembly at the last meeting closely mirrored the issues suggested over the summer by the Executive Board. Mr. Rennekamp stated that six or seven focus issues would be an ideal number for this year. Topics include:

- (1) An evaluation of housing options for graduate and professional students
- (2) An evaluation of alumni relations and development for graduate an professional students.
- (3) An evaluation of transportation issues such as locations of transit stops, reliability of shuttles, loss of access to Penn buses for dependents, and transportation for students with disabilities were discussed. Ms. Heyward stated that the van providing services to disabled students will not transport these students living off campus to another off campus location; however, the Penn bus for non-disabled students will transport these students from one off campus location to another.
- (4) An evaluation of resources for students with dependents. Issues such as an evaluation of students with dependents can be discussed by inviting Anita Mastroieni, Director of the Graduate Student Center to speak at a General Assembly meeting. Other issues brought up were loss of access to Hutchinson Gym, the status of the Family Resource Center.
- (5) An evaluation of the Penn Connects Project. Mr. Rennekamp stated that someone from the administration could be invited to speak on the Penn Connects project.

GAPSA Representative Alexander Balloon asked what the scope of these speakers' discussions would be. Mr. Rennekamp stated that it would be informational and that an administrator would give a short presentation and then the General Assembly would be given an opportunity to ask questions, voice its concerns and then deliberate. For example, Postal Land development questions could be asked after the Penn Connects presentation.

Ms. Heyward stated that after discussing issues with these speakers, the General Assembly could draft referendums based on these interactions.

- (6) An evaluation of Career Services with special emphasis on the services avilible for International Students. Mr. Rennekamp stated that Career Services could be invited to discuss

alumni databases, specifically if this office maintains international alumni contacts for students to pursue jobs abroad.

Mr. Abramsky stated that the focus issue list will help GAPSA be very successful this year. Mr. Friedman motioned to approve the list of focus issues. Mr. Balloon seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Rennekamp entertained a discussion concerning the format of these meetings with speakers. There must be time allotted for the speaker's presentation and an internal resolution discussion following the presentation. Ms. Heyward stated that no speaker should talk longer than 5-10 minutes. Mr. Rennekamp asked what an appropriate time for questions would be. Ms. Heyward stated that the General Assembly members should come prepared to these meetings with questions and that the speaker's presentation slides could be emailed to everyone in advance. Ms. Warden suggested that the speaker could leave after 30 minutes so that the internal discussion may occur after the speaker has left. Ms. Warden suggested that 15 minutes could be allotted for internal discussion. Mr. Rennekamp stated that 5-10 minutes may not be sufficient time for a speaker to present. Mr. Abramsky noted that the opinion of the Assembly was to limit the speaker to 5-10 minutes. Ms. Arlt stated that enough time should be allotted for questions. Ms. Heyward stated that the purpose of these meetings with speakers is to have an interactive forum. Mr. Abramsky noted that a discussion cannot occur efficiently unless the General Assembly members have prepared for the topic beforehand. Ms. Arlt suggested that 10-15 minutes for the speaker's presentation and 10-15 minutes for questions should be sufficient, with the entire session not exceeding 30 minutes. Mr. Abramsky asked if this time limit includes the internal discussion. Mr. Abramsky stated that an extra 30 minutes should not be used for internal discussions. Mr. Rennekamp stated that 5-10 minutes for the presentation, 20 minutes for questions, and an hour or less for internal discussion would be appropriate. Mr. Abramsky noted that the General Assembly can motion to end the internal discussion. Mr. Rennekamp asked if the appropriate internal discussion time would be 20 minutes. Ms. Heyward suggested asking the speakers to focus their presentations on graduate and professional students. Ms. Agbaje stated that the presentations should be short but 5 minutes may be too little time. GAPSA Representative Tim Shokair noted that a 5 minute presentation will always run more than 5 minutes.

New business

None

Announcements

There will be a GAPSA sponsored Law School Happy Hour on Thursday, November 6th and there will be a GAPSA sponsored SP2 Happy Hour next Thursday, November 13th.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 pm.