
Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting on July 8, 2008

The third regularly scheduled meeting of GAPSA Executive Board was convened on July 8, 2008 at 6:11 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, Saurabh Madaan, Jessica Kim, and Vicky Doan-Nguyen.

Also present via teleconference were: Mat Abramsky and Esther Agbaje.

Notes of absence were received from Alejandro Hagan and Christa Heyward.

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 Student Life Nikki Thorpe were unanimously approved.

Reports

Chair's Report

Fall Meetings with Associate Provost Andy Binns

The fall meetings with Associate Provost Andy Binns have been set for October 7th and December 16th, 2008. Both of these dates fall on Tuesdays and the meetings will begin at 4:30 pm and last for about an hour. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that these dates may change since they have been set so far in advance. However, if the dates do change, the Executive Board will be notified ahead of time. At some point the Provost and Ron Daniels will invite the Executive Board to his home for a special dinner and get-together. Last year this event was held in late November.

First Vice Chair's Report

First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan was not present.

Vice Chair for Professional Students' Report

Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky has formalized the types of committees for the fall and will be in touch with Vice Chair of Finance Christa Heyward concerning his budget. Mr.

Abramsky has also received several travel grant requests but told these students to wait as GAPSA does not have a finalized budget yet.

Vice Chair for Research Students' Report

Vice Chair for Research Students Vicky Doan-Nguyen stated that the White House has extended the deadline for approving the Higher Education Act to July 31st. The final document has been approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate but the White House's decision is still pending. The act is not being changed but simply renewed.

Vice Chair for International Students' Report

OIP Orientation Sessions

Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan will be working with the Office of International Programs to help publicize GAPSA. New international students will be participating in orientation sessions throughout the summer and Mr. Madaan created a Powerpoint slide of GAPSA information that will appear in one of these sessions.

Cultural Events

Mr. Madaan is also partnering with OIP to host and publicize cultural events. When the International Council meets in the fall, it will help plan these events further.

Academic Integrity

Mr. Madaan also will be organizing a panel discussion concerning academic integrity. International students come from diverse backgrounds with differing notions of academic integrity. Mr. Madaan asked members of the Executive Board if they would be willing to assist him in organizing this event. Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that the Honor Council at the University of Pennsylvania could collaborate on this project. Ms. Kotsovos will contact the Honor Council via email. Vice Chair for Research Students Vicky Doan-Nguyen also suggested that the Center for Teaching and Learning could assist with this project.

Vice Chair for Equity & Access's Report

Vice Chair for Equity and Access Esther Agbaje stated that the committee applications are now out and once they are submitted she will begin to hold interviews for committee positions. There is no current deadline for these applications. Ms. Agbaje will send specific deputy applications to the appropriate Vice Chairs. However, GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that each Vice Chair should take care of his or her own deputy appointment.

Vice Chair for Finance's Report

Vice Chair of Finance Christa Heyward was not present.

Vice Chair for Student Life's Report

Landlord Survey for Off Campus Housing

Vice Chair for Student Life Nikki Thorpe will be organizing a survey for students that live off-campus. Topics will include living and landlord situations. No reports can be generated from this data; however, pertinent data can be gathered. The Office of Housing wants GAPSA to host this survey to prevent any conflicts of interest within its own office.

Resource Fair at New Student Orientation

Ms. Thorpe stated that the School of Design will hold its own new student orientation on August 29th at 3:30 pm. Ms. Thorpe suggested GAPSA have a table at this event to help publicize the organization. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp suggested that representatives from the Executive Board should be sent to each school's New Student Orientation to hand out brochures, magnets, t-shirts, etc.

Vice Chair for Social Activities' Report

Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that all upcoming events can be viewed on the GAPSA website.

Vice Chair for Student Programs' Report

Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt met with Civic House and discovered their mission is attracting students interested in long term community service projects. However, Ms. Arlt is interested in one day service projects not necessarily occurring on a weekly basis. Ms. Arlt discovered service groups such as VUC Green, Mana and Share which are willing to host large groups of students.

Ms. Arlt reported that the Penn Rec contact is only available to meet between the hours of 10am and 4pm and as such this meeting will be postponed until August.

Ms. Arlt also met with Nicole, a fellow at the GSC to help host Philly Fun Fridays. Only July 18th, after work hours, there will be a minigolf trip at Franklin Square. The tickets will go on sale next week. On August 2nd at 10:30am, there will be a food tour at Reading Terminal Market. The kayaking trip will be held on September 28th.

Vice Chair for Communications' Report

Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that the GAPSA business cards have been moved to the GAPSA office. Ms. Kotsovos also mentioned that there will be two press releases that will appear in the Almanac. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that one will be announcing the new GAPSA Executive Board since this has not yet been published in the Almanac.

Vice Chair for Operations' Report

Vice Chair for Operations Sarah Smith had nothing to report.

Follow-up Questions on Reports

Follow-up questions had already been asked.

Follow-up Actions on Reports

None

Special Orders

GAPSA University-wide July E-mail

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that GAPSA is permitted to send one email in July that will reach all graduate and professional students. Mr. Rennekamp said that an announcement about applications for deputies and University committee positions would be included in the e-mail. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt suggested mentioning the Bed Bath and Beyond promotion that not only allows students to receive gift certificates but also helps fund GradFest since 5% of each purchase is donated to the event. Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos suggested including in the email links to Ms. Arlt's and Ms. Kim's upcoming events.

Unfinished Business

Online Ticketing (brownpapertickets.com)

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp has been talking with Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim and Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt concerning the possible use of

brownpapertickets.com for event ticketing. Graduate and professional students would be able to purchase tickets online instead of purchasing the tickets at the Graduate Student Center. However, the main concern would be ensuring that the tickets would be sold solely to graduate and professional students at the University of Pennsylvania. It was suggested that GAPSA could protect the ticketing weblinks with a PennKey, but this may lead to future problems. In addition, some events serve alcohol and it would be impossible to check ID for this. Also, it would be difficult to resell tickets that are sold from a provider such as the Kimmel Center. It was decided that using brownpapertickets.com may be beneficial but only in specific instances such as free events or large events like GradFest. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the use of brownpapertickets.com would make Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward's job easier as she would not have to collect cash from the Graduate Student Center. A check from the website would be mailed directly to the Office of Student Life. Mr. Rennekamp stated that if a Vice Chair coordinates an event that could benefit from this to email him and speak with Lynn Moller to set up a brownpapertickets.com account. In addition, the Vice Chair should work with Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos to include a link to brownpapertickets.com through the GAPSA website. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim mentioned that not every student possesses a credit card and the sole use of brownpapertickets.com for events may exclude interested students. Ms. Kotsovos suggested the option of billing to the student's bursar account. Mr. Rennekamp stated he did not believe GAPSA had ever set up this type of payment planning but that it would be worth investigating further.

Revisit Ivy Summit-Who's going

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp received two emails from Executive Board members concerning the issue of who will attend this year's Ivy Summit. There is concern that there is no overlap between last year's and this year's proposed attendees. Mr. Rennekamp stated that overlap is an important dimension at the summit as discussions are most productive when there is a mix of new and returning attendees. Vice Chair for Finance Christa Heyward had mentioned that the proposed list does not include many research students and that the event heavily focuses on PhD issues. Ms. Heyward suggested sending seven people including Deanna from the Graduate Student Center. However, Mr. Rennekamp would need to inquire with Harvard to see if this would be acceptable. Financially GAPSA could fund an extra attendee. Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos suggested that the attendees ride a bus (e.g. "Bolt Bus") from Philadelphia to New York and from New York to Boston. Each leg of the trip would be about twelve dollars, significantly reducing expected travel costs. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt suggested taking the Amtrak train as they have group discount rates. Mr. Rennekamp stated that Ms. Heyward should also be included in this year's the Ivy Summit due to her experience with the University Council, her involvement in diversity issues and he studies as a PhD student. There were no objections to this suggestion.

GA outing to Atlantic City

Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim gave an update on the GA outing to Atlantic City. The outing would consist of a day trip with bus transportation and group bonding activities. This would help with the social aspect of GAPSA and hopefully improve turnout at future GA meetings. The only restriction would be to refrain from bringing friends, spouses, partners, or anyone not involved with GAPSA. Ms. Kim would appreciate any input and ideas for the trip's agenda. The date is set for September 19th, which is a Friday since the weekends were already booked. It would be difficult to move this date to another week due to the Strike's happy hour and Moshulu, which both occur in September. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that professional students might not be able to attend due to class conflicts. Ms. Arlt suggested instead planning a big dinner in Philly and Mr. Rennekamp suggested minigolf or another active event. However, if this day trip or other event will occur in September, it will need to be planned in advance and the day trip may require too much commitment too early in advance. However, there would not be enough time for the General Assembly to vote on this issue before the day trip event is scheduled. Ms. Arlt suggested brainstorming alternate activities and bringing any ideas to the next Executive Board meeting.

New Business

Resolutions on the GAPSA Website

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp will be putting more information up on the GAPSA website to help make GAPSA more accessible and transparent to its constituents. Mr. Rennekamp suggested posting for example resolutions, minutes, final budget for this year, last year's budget and unspent funds, and Robert's Rules. However, Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan proposed a resolution that anything confidential would not be included in the minutes and therefore would not be posted on the website. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky suggested that there could be a vote during a meeting on whether a certain discussion should be confidential, and then a later vote to open up discussion publicly. Mr. Rennekamp stated that public minutes would be shared; however, if there is a two-thirds vote to close the session, then no minutes would be taken during that time period. If there is more than one-third vote for a topic to remain open, then the topic cannot be discussed and it cannot go into the minutes.

Parliamentarian

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp suggested the idea of appointing a parliamentarian to help focus on other issues such as the logistics of Robert's Rules. The parliamentarian provides a check on Chair but could also quickly shut down discussion of important topics. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that this could help improve the efficiency of General Assembly meetings. Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that the parliamentarian in the Undergraduate Assembly ruins the flow of conversation. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt stated that if Robert's Rules are followed in order, then time would be saved. Mr. Rennekamp suggested that a Vice Chair could serve also as parliamentarian and that any member of the Executive Board can voice an opinion during meetings in accordance with Robert's Rules. Mr. Rennekamp also

stated that the Executive Board may appoint the parliamentarian, with the consent of the General Assembly. Vice Chair for Professional Students Mat Abramsky volunteered to serve as parliamentarian.

Integrating International Students into GAPSA Social Events

Vice Chair for International Students Saurabh Madaan reported that some of GAPSA's social activities are culturally off-putting to some cultures especially events that serve alcohol. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim stated that GAPSA puts on many social events that don't involve alcohol. The question would be how to have more events targeted to international students and if GAPSA already holds these types of events, how can GAPSA publicize the events to international students and more broadly. Vice Chair of Communications Alexandra Kotsovos stated that if more students would visit the GAPSA website, then the students would be aware of all GAPSA events, alcoholic and non-alcoholic. Mr. Madaan stated that there are small orientation sessions sponsored by the Office of International Programs and these are held throughout the summer. However, usually these are dinner receptions and afterwards, the international students do not really socialize amongst each other and other students. Mr. Madaan stated that international students find it difficult to amalgamate with the American student culture. Mr. Madaan suggested holding a cultural gathering with music from different countries. International students are hesitant to attend events that serve alcohol and this is not conducive to amalgamation. Mr. Madaan suggested reaching out to international students and targeting them by planning one or two initiatives cosponsored by OIP. Vice Chair for Social Activities Jessica Kim suggested getting feedback from international students on events. GAPSA strives to embrace different cultures without emphasizing stereotypes. GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp suggested once the International Council is up and running, a survey could be distributed to see what types of activities international students would feel comfortable attending. Vice Chair for Student Programs Christina Arlt met with Anita from the Graduate Student Center and discovered that summer events are typically filled with international students. International students appear to sign up for all nonalcoholic events without knowing what these events actually are. Mr. Madaan stated that lots of GSC events are attended by international students but this is not the case for GAPSA events. Mr. Madaan suggested possibly the international students are not aware of the existence of these GAPSA events. Ms. Arlt suggested selling nonalcoholic drink tickets at a reduced cost. Ms. Kim stated that students could take advantage of this by purchasing reduced nonalcoholic drink tickets and yet still consume alcohol. Ms. Kim stated that GAPSA should not contribute to treating people differently with separate drinking tickets. Ms. Kim said it is a better idea to have more nonalcoholic activities as GAPSA wants the international students to be integrated with the rest of campus. Ms. Kim suggested cosponsoring an annual event for the international students. Vice Chair for Research Students Vicky Doan-Nguyen stated that there is a multicultural event at the beginning of each school year and GAPSA could possibly cosponsor this. Mr. Rennekamp stated that the International Council could come up with a proposal for this or some other type of event. Ms. Arlt stated she could also plan more events for a broader range of students.

New business for next meeting



If anyone has any new business for next meeting, email First Vice Chair Alejandro Hagan.

GAPSA Chair Andrew Rennekamp stated that GAPSA is not having much success advocating for an administration-run Campus Climate Survey. There is a similar survey for undergraduate students but even then not all the information gathered by the survey was shared. Mr. Rennekamp has started to draft a survey for graduate and professional students and will share this online. Mr. Rennekamp welcomes any feedback including any meaningful questions about topics GAPSA can help change. The intent of this survey is not to publicize and unearth all the things wrong with the University. GAPSA would like to use the information as an internal tool to see what issues GAPSA should focus on. If GAPSA is not aware of a specific issue within a specific population, then this survey could help. The survey would include topics such as student life issues, transportation, and housing. GAPSA would generally survey academic issues, but refer these types of issues to specific school governments for advocacy at the school or program level. If this proves to not be successful, then GAPSA can bring the issue up with the Provost. GAPSA can only be successful in this if there are strong numbers and data available. Mr. Rennekamp will put the survey out on GoogleDocs. Mr. Rennekamp said to save all survey questions and ideas for he next Executive Board meeting

Announcements

No announcements were made.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.