

GAPSA Research Council
Graduate Student Activities Suite, Houston Hall
Wednesday, 18 February 2009, 6-7 pm
Minutes

Research Council Members in Attendance:

Jonathan Lukens - Vice Chair for Research
Tim Shokair (+ Carla's proxy) - SAS
Leslie Anne Warden - SAS, Deputy Vice Chair
Allison Sullivan - SAS
Stephanie Milk - SAS
 Raleigh Martin (visiting - thinking about running for the SAS seat)
Wenting Lee - SAS
Lee Soloman - Medicine
Jacqui Simonet - Medicine
Corbit Brown - Nursing
Susan Haas - Annenberg
Henry Friedman - Wharton

Agenda:

1. Research Student Travel Grant Update

Jonathan: The Spring deadline just passed. We approved grants in the amount of \$18,000 and change. I did this because right now we have a 50-70% reimbursement. \$18,000 is more than we would normally give out per term, but we are expecting lower reimbursement requests. There was only 1 that we out and out refused, and that person never got back to me.

That's about 60 grants.

I'm thinking that \$300 isn't enough to offer people for travel grants. We should raise the ceiling – maybe \$400? Christa [VP Finance] suggested \$500.

Allison: or 50% of their projected budget.

Jonathan: Yes. We have people going to international conferences – \$300 just isn't a lot, and maybe that's why people aren't bothering with their reimbursements.

Jacqui: Maybe, can we look more specifically at how many places they are getting money from?

Jonathan: Right now, the policy is only one other funding source, and I think we should keep that in place. Like there were several people in SAS who didn't apply for SAS funding. We need to make sure that info goes out.

I also have a problem with the reimbursement period. University policy gives people six months after travel to submit reimbursements. I have about \$7,000 which has not been reimbursed, and I think it won't go out, but how can I know? I'd like to give them a 30 day after travel reimbursement date. Latest they [the reimbursements] can come in is the day of application for the new cycle. This would mean we know how much money we have to spend at the next travel grant cycle.

Jacqui: We've had this problem in BGS – 30 days for submission is a solution.
Susan: Can we make it longer? Maybe 6 weeks?
Henry: And maybe allow people to apply for an extension? What if they're out of the country?
Jonathan: That does happen. I think the VC Research can always be discretionary. We need to put a deadline which will work in 99% of the cases. If they haven't applied within 4 months I'm willing to bet they've forgotten about it. Do we have assent setting a 45 day deadline is reasonable?
Lee: With an extenuating circumstances caveat.
Susan: As credit card statements takes 30 days.
Tim: This is important when you are dealing with foreign travel - you want exact exchange rate [for reimbursement].
Jonathan: Good point. I'd say 45 days; if something extenuating, they can contact the VP Research. I don't want to be a hard ass - our job is to give the money away. Is the increase to \$500 for the travel grant reasonable to everybody? In the short term we give away potentially fewer grants
Leslie: How sure are you the provost will step up? Currently they match our travel grant spending - will they match a higher amount?
Jonathan: We need to spend down the surplus. We were encouraged to spend, give travel grants. But this is not a reality now. Do we want to make grants more competitive and give more or do we want to do some sort of stepwise program where if you're traveling internationally you can get more?
Susan: This sounds interesting.
Allison: People who travel domestically aren't going to spend thousands.
Jonathan: It's a relatively small number traveling internationally – maybe 7 in 60 – but they are affected.
Henry: I think we should do it but keep track of what people are applying for.
Jonathan: Should we go back through the grant applications and see what people are applying for?
Henry: Will changing the grant amount change what people say they are expecting to spend?
Tim: You can say the maximum is \$500, but if you get a lot of applications drop it to \$300.
Allison: A limit of \$500 or 50%.
Jonathan: You would be surprised what people will spend on hotels.
Leslie: I went through a lot of extra effort to find cheap things, knowing I could only get \$300.
Jonathan: It's true that people might start spending more money – and then we have a problem trying to figure out what's reasonable, what's unreasonable. Yet for at least 6 years we have only been giving \$300, and professional council, I think, is up to \$400.
Leslie: No, I think we don't have the money or Provost dedication to funding extra increases in this program.
Jonathan: We can be stricter about this, make sure we're only funding applications which are complete, have not been funded recently.

Tim: We can be more discerning with grants asking for more than \$300.
Corbit: What about people who are applying to us and not to school grants?
Jonathan: We can make a rule to give preference to people who are actually applying to their school or some other funding institutions. We can ask that information on the grant application.
Leslie, Jacqui: It's already there.
Susan: Regarding reimbursement rate. Do we want to call people who have not applied for reimburse and ask why?
Jonathan: I have some ideas about what to do with that money... if we're finished with this we can move on. Shall I work it into a cleaner version?
Leslie: Can you also bring it up to the Provost, since in the end you'd like to get him to shoulder it?
Jonathan: I will.
Corbit: how many less grants will we be able to give?
Jonathan: That's tricky, because we don't know how many are going to actually apply for reimbursement or who are going to spend less than they were approved for. But I think this would be nice for the people who have to apply to international conferences.
Tim: Assuming you funded the maximum of 60 applications at \$300, a \$500 cap would only allow for 36 [if each were funded \$500].
Jonathan: A lot of those people who applied last round wouldn't have been allowed for 500.
Tim: This is something foreign to me, as when I go on a trip it's paid by grant. Would you have to pay out of pocket any of your extra expenses?
Jonathan: Yes.
Tim: I think with the hard sciences, you would be asked to get external funding.
Lee: Hard science grants tend to have travel written in.
Tim: People like me would ask for as much from GAPSA as possible and the rest would be covered by our grants.
Jonathan: It'll have to be fairly nuanced, but I think it's time to look at that cap.
consensus that cleaning up and looking at it is the way forward

2. How to best allocate \$7000 left over from travel grants this year.

Jonathan: Left over \$7000. My recommendation: we use that money to offer another Provost award (\$6000). Right now, we are offering 6 provost awards. I'd like to use that extra \$7000 to make a 7th one.
Jacqui: Would we stipulate that that's for a research student?
Jonathan: I'd prefer to just throw it into the kitty, but I suppose we could do that.
Henry: Doesn't one research student already get it.
(general consensus is that it's pretty much all research students)
Jacqui: I guess I don't feel very generous giving professional students money because of the conversation in the GA several meetings ago. I'm fine that it in concept, but making it for a research student just means "you professional students aren't taking our money."
Susan: If they did it by ranking, and the seventh one was a professional student but we wanted a research student, they would be bumped down.

Jacqui: I agree that it's a good use of the money. That's not what I'm saying at all.

Susan: You can actually specify it for the best research proposal.

Leslie: So everyone in the top 7 would still be funded.

Henry: Yeah. But I kinda like the first way better.

Tim: Maybe we should make the review process totally separate from the other one? But that would be a lot of work.

(general consensus – no)

Allison: Could we spend it on something else? More travel grants?

Jonathan: but we funded everything that came through – we aren't spending the money. We could put it into the GAPSA surplus.

Henry: Can we invest this in something long term?

Allison: Are we voting between doing this and increase travel grants?

Jacqui: No, because we don't know if we can increase travel grants. We can do both.

Carla: Can we use this money to bring in speakers?

Jonathan: We could use this money to prepare for the zombie apocalypse.

Corbit: Totally out of left field – sponsoring community service project? Get research students involved.

Leslie: Like rebuilding together?

Andrew: it's hard for GAPSA to buy things like hammers, etc, which they want us to do. So Rebuilding together, specifically, is difficult. In general, we cannot contribute to a charity.

Tim: Gym memberships?

Henry: I was kinda serious about getting a research computer at the GSC for electronic travel grants, or sprucing up the drinks at the GSC. The pdfs are automated [for the travel grant applications], but it'd be easier if they were all fed into one computer.

Jonathan: Shall I take all of these suggestions and put them into an email for everyone so we chat about them?

Leslie: Don't we already have a GAPSA computer?

Jonathan: Yes, but it's ancient, and only for the exec. I don't want to fund a \$7000 computer only for exec.

Leslie: But we buy something cheap for travel grant use and put the rest elsewhere.

Jonathan: Will put this in an email and discuss this further next time.

****Adjourned****