Graduate Student Senate  
Senate Meeting  
Thursday December 6 2012  
Campus Center 917  

Minutes

Present:
Officers: Hongmei Sun, Garth Schwellenbach, Robin Anderson  
Staff: Adina Gianelli, Matt Ferrari, Ghazah Abbasi, Srinivas Lankala  
Others: David Vaillancourt, Becky Lockwood.

Hongmei Sun welcomed the Senators and urged them to get their photographs for the website taken before the meeting began.

Matthew Ryder proposed to pass the minutes from the November 6 meeting, Sara Green second. Minutes were passed with one abstention.

Hongmei said the Finance committee seats are already filled, and that there were two nominations for senator seats on the Executive Committee (EC).
- Dani O’Brien asked what the EC responsibilities entail.
- Robin Anderson explained the EC meeting schedule and what the EC does.
- David Vaillancourt explained that Senators would be able to participate better if they were involved in the EC’s decisions.
- Hongmei said it was useful for the Senators to be in the EC to provide transition and continuity for officers as well.
- Matthew Ryder introduced himself and explained why he was interested in the EC.
- Gesine Hinterwalder introduced herself and said she would be interested in the EC seat to contribute more to the GSS.
- Sereres Johnston proposed to accept both nominations, Bradley Bolin seconded.
- Matthew and Gesine were elected unanimously.

Robin said the Finance Committee had approved the funding proposal from the China Study Club and asked the Senate to approve the proposal.
- Zhongjin Li explained the activities of the China Study Club and said the current proposal was towards organizing a film screening. The Club wants to attract more non-Chinese students and to open up communication around issues concerning China and the proposed film screening would be useful in this regard.
Dani proposed to accept the funding request. Matthew seconded. The motion was passed with one abstention.

General discussion: setting the schedule for next semester: Hongmei asked senators what the best time for meetings would be.
- Matthew Ryder said Fridays would be best in terms of graduate class schedules.
- Faune disagreed and said although there are no classes and most people don’t come in on Fridays.
- Hongmei said its only once a month and it could be turned into a fun meeting with drinks after.
- Bradley said it would be a good way for senators to get to know each other.
- Travis Gagen said the meeting could be extended into the grad lounge and turned into an open house for all students.
- Sereres said we could set the time for the first meeting and decide the rest later.
- Joe Sapp asked if proxy voting would be allowed.
- Robin said the bylaws are unclear about another senator acting as a proxy so the senate could set up a bylaws committee to to look into that.
- Hongmei said the elections committee could also arrange an alternate senator election online.
- Garth concluded that tentatively the second Friday of the semester would be the first meeting and the rest of the schedule can be decided at that meeting.
- Hongmei said the senate could also book the Reading Room if the meeting intends to move into the UPub after adjournment.

Hongmei announced the GSS trip to UMass Worcester.
- Robin added that the trip to Worcester was for a meeting of all student governments and explained the context of the proposal for graduate student representation on the Board of Trustees and increased voting rights for grad students.
- Matthew said that care should be taken so that the student voice is not diluted by the appointment of more non-student trustees
- Travis asked if the meeting is open.
- Robin said it is and everyone is welcome. The other reason for the meeting is to open up lines of communication among grad students at all UMass campuses although two other campuses have declined to join. There are issues that affect all of us in common especially concerning State funding.
- Dani asked which of the campuses would not be attending.
- Robin said it was Dartmouth and Lowell. In Dartmouth it was their GSS president who said no, and in Lowell the GSS as a whole said they had no problem with the current structure of the Board of Trustees.
- Tim Sutton said that although the campus GSSes may not be favorable but the students themselves would be interested, and we should keep in mind that this is a long term fight and even if we don’t get what we want, its useful to start communication with other campuses so a beginning is made and we can be prepared when the issue does come to a head.
Guest Speaker:

Hongmei introduced Becky Lockwood from the Center for Women and Community.
- Becky introduced the CWC spoke about history of the center and what they do on campus: Women of Color Leadership Network including Body Politics; counselling services, work with GWN, support groups, dissertation supprt groups, community education and rape crisis services, work with sororities, Take Back the Night, etc. They have 13 staff, are part of CSD, 50% grant funded, with 65 sudent employees, 70% being students of color. They also have an advocate to work with the campus police, legal system, etc.
- Hongmei asked if they plan to change the name of the rape counselling services to reflect the broader range of services provided.
- Becky replied that they will consider it but they’re still getting used to the recent name change of the Center from the Everywoman’s Center.
- Ghazah asked if that name change had been contentious.
- Becky replied it was not as much as it could have been since in fact it was an impetus from staff.
- Hongmei asked if the counselling services are only for women.
- Becky replied that while they are mainly used by women, they also provide counselling about general issues that affect both men and women.
- Joe Sapp asked how many students use the Center’s services annually.
- Becky replied that it is around 165 people in the rape crisis services and around 400 phone calls.

Committee Reports:

Garth presented an update on the Housing task force.

Ghazah updated the meeting about the funding and progress committee. The committee has 10 members and has met twice and made a plan for next semester. The main question before the committee is of decline of funding available for grad students. Other issues are specific to departments. Most of the committee members are SBS students and funding is tied to TAships, which is different from the situation in the natural sciences. Next semester the committee will do focus group, surveys, and an open house for each school around these issues. Abby Templer is collecting data that will be useful for designing the surveys and discussions.
- Hongmei said the Committee should ensure that non-SBS students should be part of it as well.
- Bradley said his program assures no grad funding at all, while Maria Fernanda said she was from the same department but has funding for her program, so even within departments there are different situations.
- Bie Aweh said other Education departments, like SJE, have no funding either.
- Ghazah said we can organize something in each school around this.
- Matthew Ryder said that STEM department funding is based around each professor and their grants.
- Sara Green said the situation is similar in Chemical Engineering, and this implies they have to keep the professor happy, but they do get a fellowship assured for a year and four semesters of TAships.
- Matthew clarified that Mechanical Engineering is different since there is no guarantee of funding and no TAships in the department.
- Sereres Johnston said that in Physics, as long as one’s GPA is good and certain benchmarks are met, you are guaranteed funding even if the professor doesn’t have any more grant money.
- Bie said all this was very different in SJE, because the department has absolutely no money, so students look only for external sources.
- Hillary said it’s the same in Student Development and advanced students may teach but not first year students.
- Robin spoke about increased summer programs and the effect that may have on summer funding.

Announcements:
1. Robin announced the visit of the UMass President Caret and meeting with students on Tuesday December 11, 2012
2. He also announced the meeting of the Board of Trustees the next day in the Mullins Center: this is an open meeting and students are encouraged to attend.
3. David announced professional development workshops from the grad school

Garth proposed to adjourn and Bradley seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 1.25 PM.