Graduate Student Senate
Senate Meeting
Thursday, April 24 2014
Campus Center 904-08

Minutes

Present:
Officers: Robin Anderson, Samantha Sterba, Adina Giannelli.
Others: Markeysha Davis, Srinivas Lankala (Staff), Eric Hoyt (GEO).

Robin Anderson called the meeting to order at 1.02 PM.

The minutes were approved with 16 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

Tim Sutton clarified certain points about the JTFRA, that may not have been mentioned in the presentations and open forums by the JTFRA co-chairs. He passed around excerpts of the powerpoint presentation about Huron’s recommendations. He also spoke about and passed around the alternative strategic plan prepared by StuPoCO over this semester. He hoped that this alternative plan would survive into the next round of activism.

Markeysha Davis spoke about her attendance in the JTFSO meetings and their insertion of diversity into the process. She hoped they would keep up the momentum over the summer and fall. She also spoke about the meeting with the Office of Professional Development at the Graduate School and said it was a very useful meeting in terms of figuring out the different ways in which the GSS could work with the OPD to provide facilities for grad students; e.g. a pilot coaching program for comments on research, teaching, etc. leading to a form of peer coaching. She added the OPD also wanted to work with senators to start a pilot coaching program. Maureen Gallagher agreed that it was very productive and that they were open to organizing or co-sponsoring training events in each department if they were contacted. Juan Manuel Ruiz-Hau asked if the JTFSO meetings were open and that he would be happy to attend them if they were.

Robin presented updates from the latest meeting of the A&F SAB, which included a discussion on sexual harassment training for the UMPD. Juan Manuel updated the meeting on the meeting of the Student Affairs SAB.

GEO: Eric Hoyt reminded senators about filling out bargaining surveys, especially in STEM departments. Juan Manuel asked about GEO’s concerns, if any, about professionalization. Eric asked what this implied, and Juan Manuel replied that he was
referring to the phenomenon of replacing graduate students with lower priced labor in the form of professional instructors and staff. Phillip Geer asked for clarifications if this means tackling the raises that price grad students out of jobs. Adina said the discussion would be more appropriate in the next GEO meeting.

Adina presented a motion to transfer money from the GSS operations fund to ad hoc funding. She explained that this is because of new GSOs formed recently and robust funding requests. Kathryn Grasha asked what he point of a budget was if we kept approving ad hoc requests every time. Adina explained that when the budget was made there were only 21 GSOs now there are 15 more and the new ones had not applied for line-item funding. Colleen Ashley asked what would happen to the funds if the motion is rejected. Adina replied that the money would roll over into the next budget.

Kathryn Accurso moved to approve, Tim seconded. The motion passed with 19 in favor and 3 abstentions.

BRO funding request: Janna Mantua explained the request: for purchasing equipment for a school science education project to encourage children interested in neuroscience. Juan Manuel expressed concern that paying for equipment would be a new development because so far we have only funded event-related costs in departments. Adina clarified that she had similar concerns but had spoken to CSD and there would be no problems in terms of dealing with procurement, etc. Robin said that GSS cannot regulate how a GSO spends money, as long as they follow all the relevant guidelines. Christoph Krumm said that this was a good request especially since the material purchased would be used repeatedly. Colleen said that this should be encouraged because they are going outside the university and engaging with the community. Markeysha also said such service learning initiatives were valuable and that it could be useful to grad students in many ways. Jonathan Dusenbury said that this is a good funding opportunity that had the potential to improve town-gown relations. Robin said the only stipulation is that the grad students should be benefited. Colleen moved and Kathryn Accurso seconded. The motion passed with 20 votes in favor and 2 abstentions.

DuBois Department GSO funding request for end-of-year social: Adina introduced the motion and explained that the GSO is new and this is their second request. Juan Manuel said it should be made mandatory that a detailed itemized budget be presented to the senate, and that the GSO be told that the GSS would fund them if they are active in the senate. Adina clarified that this is a new GSO and should not be judged on the basis of attendance at GSS meetings. Maureen Gallagher moved to approve and Kathryn Accurso seconded. The motion passed with 19 votes in favor and 2 abstentions.

SGSA: request for funding for food for 3 upcoming events: Departmental writing retreats and a end of year social. Ragini clarified why the SGSA representatives were not at the meeting and said the writing retreats were in great demand. Brenda Muzeta moved to approve and Kathryn Accurso seconded. The motion passed with 19 votes in favor and 1 abstention.
Samantha presented the report of the elections committee on officer elections. Brenda asked whether a new election for treasurer was needed since the winner had declined the position. Samantha replied that the committee had discussed with SLSO and that since the senate had not yet ratified the election, it would be appropriate and legitimate to offer the position to the runner-up. Kathryn Accurso said concerns could arise because the election only had two candidates and it could be argued that the runner-up did not carry the majority. She added that the committee should look at amending the procedure to account for this possibility in the future.

Samantha moved to ratify the election report and Adina seconded. The motion was passed with 16 votes in favor, and 4 abstentions.

Adina presented the GSS budget for 2014-15 and explained the broad outlines of the projections for the year. She said the budget would be voted on in the next senate final meeting on May 5.

Markeysha spoke about the issues surrounding racist attacks on Carolyn Gardner in the Amherst Regional High School. Ragini added that a TO in Sociology also faced such racist slurs in her own classroom. Juan Manuel and Brenda both pointed out that Carolyn is also a fellow graduate student in the School of Education aside from teaching at Amherst High School.

Robin moved to adjourn. Phillip seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2.25 PM.