Graduate Student Senate
Senate Meeting
Thursday November 8 2012
Campus Center 917

Minutes

Present:
Officers: Hongmei Sun, Garth Schwellenbach, Robin Anderson.
Staff: Ghazah Abbasi, Matt Ferrari, Adina Gianelli, Srinivas Lankala.
Others: Jocelyn Silverlight, Derek Doughty, Abby Templer, Brian Quattrochi, John McCarthy, David Vaillancourt, Jen Healy, Dana Johnson, Jenny Krichevsky, Neelofer Qadir, Sean Gordon, Bob Darrow, Kevin Felton.

Hongmei Sun welcomed the new senators and explained the senator’s placards, the meeting procedure and the process of voting.
- Travis Gagen proposed approving the minutes. Bradley Bolin seconded. Passed unanimously.
- David Vaillancourt handed out a printed guide to Robert’s Rules of Order and presented the main ideas of parliamentary procedure and its importance for smooth and efficient conduct of large meetings.
- Bradley Bolin emphasised the need for senators to speak up and take the initiative in putting their issues forward in the meeting.
- Hongmei reminded the meeting that all motions should be given in writing to the chair.

Garth Schwellenbach spoke about the recent work of the elections committee, and welcomed the newly elected senators. He said there might be another round of elections in the Spring if necessary.

Hongmei updated the meeting about the recent work of the Executive Committee, including a meeting with the director of University Health Services.
- Garth added a brief history of the current issues with UHS.
- Robin Anderson continued the summary of the GSS officers’ latest meeting with the UHS: with a special focus on starting a women’s clinic and the demand to hire an Ob-Gyn specialist.
- Hongmei said Adina will continue to move the issue forward and do further work on the demands of women on the UHS. She added that UHS will set up a new
committee to look into SHIP, and asked any interested members and graduate students to get in touch with her.

Garth presented an update from the Childcare committee. He said that all the funds were disbursed in October and the process went smoothly.
- Sereres Johnston asked how many grad students are parents, how many have got funding and how many were denied?
- Garth replied that they have no precise idea of the number of graduate student parents, but there is an income criteria to the childcare allocation, so the process is self-regulating in a way.

Hongmei spoke about the need for senator participation in the Executive and Finance Committees and asked for nominations to the two vacant seats on the Executive Committee and one seat on the Finance committee.
- Garth added that membership of the Executive Committee would be a good opportunity to gain some experience of the issues if senators wish to run for office next year.
- There were no nominations from the floor for the seats on the Executive Committee.
- Matthew Ryder nominated himself for the Finance Committee. Bradley Bolin proposed to elect Matthew and Faune Albert seconded. Matthew was unanimously elected.

Robin announced there were ad hoc funding requests from the English Graduate Organization (EGO), Pioneer Magazine, Graduate Association of Europeanists (GAE) and Chemical Engineering Graduate Students (ChEGS).

Hari Kumar from EGO spoke about the upcoming English graduate student conference and presented a request for funding of $400.
- Matthew Ryder asked what other funding has come through for the conference.
- Hari replied that they had applied for funds from the graduate school, and other bodies, including GSS line-item funding. They had also organized other fundraising activities such as a bake sale.
- Matthew Ryder asked why the EGO was asking for ad-hoc funding and had not included the request in their line-item budget, since the Conference was planned in advance.
- Hari said they will do that from next time around. This is the first year they have had a stable planning process and leadership.
- Xueting Jiang asked if members contribute to the EGO.
- Hari said the members do contribute, and EGO has a very strong membership.

Bob Darrow from Pioneer magazine requested funds for printing costs and newspaper racks. He said the magazine is a new organization so they couldn’t request this funding in a line-item budget. He said they do have lot of other funding from advertising and other sources and added that it costs $3000 for a single issue.
- Xueting Jiang asked who would be the readership of this magazine?
Bob Darrow replied that it would include everyone on campus, although they intend that the bulk of the writing will be done by graduate students.

Dana Johnson from the Graduate Association of Europeanists introduced the GAE as a new organization asking for ad-hoc funding for upcoming events. She explained that the GAE originated in the European Studies program in the Anthropology department but is now trying to become more interdisciplinary. She said that the first event that they seek funding for is a reception to introduce the organization to more graduate students and researchers in various departments across the campus. She hoped that this would lead to greater participation in future interdisciplinary seminars and other activities that the organization planned to host.

- Matthew Ryder asked what other fundraising the GAE had been doing.
- Dana replied that this was the first request for funds and they haven’t approached any other body.

ChEGS: used to be a social organization, and became a representative departmental GSO this year, so they are applying for ad-hoc funding this year. The funding request is for refreshments at meetings, seminars, etc. They have already raised money through T-shirt sales and contributions from the department.

Matthew Ryder asked if the funding requests could be voted on separately.
- Robin replied that the individual requests have been approved by the Finance committee and the Senate only had to approve the committee’s decision, so it would be preferable to have a single vote.
- Matthew proposed a motion to vote on considering the funding proposals separately.
- 11 voted for and 16 against. The motion was not passed.
- Robin proposed a motion to vote on approving all the funding requests. Travis seconded.
- 31 voted in favor, 1 against and 1 abstained.
- The motion to approve the funding requests was passed.

Hongmei introduced John McCarthy, the dean of the Graduate School and invited him to address the meeting.
- John McCarthy congratulated the GSS on its transformation from what he remembered as a moribund organization to a lively one. He introduced himself and his office and spoke about the work of the graduate school in the coming year. He said it mainly involved routine logistical work such as the mechanics of graduation, commencement, transcripts and so on. In addition he mentioned new initiatives such as a full-time graduate student grants services office, helping students master the ‘elevator speech’, a new graduate assistant to help with mid-term assessment process of TAs, a subscription to the Versatile PhD and planning other activities like workshops in conjunction with Student Affairs.
- Sereres Johnston asked if there exists any information of male vs female graduate student attrition rates at UMass.
- The dean said it is not public information, but the means exist to generate the information if there are no privacy issues.
- The dean also mentioned that there was limited funding available for academic events run by GSOs.
- David Vaillancourt asked the Dean speak more about the graduate council and its role.
- The Dean explained the hierarchy in the graduate school and the university, grad council’s place and role and the involvement of grad students in the grad council.
- Hari asked what issues the grad council was dealing with currently.
- The Dean replied that the sequester is the biggest issue right now in terms of funding for RAs who are funded by the NIH. Other questions before the council include the need for streamlining doctoral prospectus procedures across departments because of confusion about what a prospectus is.
- Hari said writing issues were important for all graduate students and the new writing center was great.
- Bradley said it depended on the counsellor and that most counsellors were trained to advise undergraduates, and graduate students have very different writing needs.
- Matt Ferrari said that the University Writing Committee would be a good place to start this discussion for a graduate student-specific writing center.
- The Dean said that writing issues are also important for international students, and will look into the proces of advising for graduate writing.

Hongmei then presented Brian Quatrocchi, student trustee from UMass Worcester and invited him to address the meeting.
- Brian introduced himself, the Worcester campus and the Board of Trustees and its role and the need for graduate student representation on the BOT. He asked the senators whether they think it makes sense to have more graduate student trustees on the BOT.
- Robin said he spoke to Student Legal Services and others about this issue, and added it would be good to get a sense of what the Senate feels about this issue, since not all campuses think alike on the issue.
- Hongmei announced that Jen Healy, the UMass student trustee was present in the meeting and invited her to speak about the issue.
- Jen Healy introduced herself and said she was strongly in favor of graduate student trustee positions, but added that they should also think about expanding voting rights for all five existing student trustees, since currently only any two may vote at a given time.
- Bradley spoke in favor of adding a graduate student trustee from each campus.
- Derek Doughty agreed, and said having graduate student trustees would have made the UHS issue fight much easier. He asked Robin which campus was against representation for graduate students on the BOT.
- Robin said it was UMass Dartmouth, and offered to go down to Dartmouth to convince them.
- Abby Templer asked what the process to get new trustees was, and what graduate students could do.
- Robin said it’s a lengthy process, that involved going through the university authorities, the Trustees, the state representatives and the other campuses.
- David Vaillancourt added that the GSS can draft a resolution to this effect and take it to the administration and the BOT. He said the Wellman document allows for this and the GSS must use this available process. He suggested using the structure at peer institutions as an example to get administrators to listen.
- Matt Ferrari asked if there were existing proposals around to expand voting rights for student trustees.
- Brian said there was such an initiative and spoke about the proposal to expand voting to all existing student trustees. He added that it might be more effective to suggest a non-voting member first to get the other trustees on board.
- Ghazah Abbasi asked why other student trustees do not have the right to vote.
- Jen Healy said it was because the current BOT structure was designed before the expansion to a five-campus system. She explained the history of the BOT vis-à-vis the UMass system expansion and the history of the demand for full voting rights.
- Abby asked if it involved changing the Board’s bylaws.
- Brian replied that it does.
- Garth asked for a sense of what the senators felt and asked for a show of hands if they are interested in this issue.
- Most of the members raised their hands.

Hongmei asked about the possibility of setting a senate meeting schedule for next semester.
- Garth said it would be best to come to the next meeting with possible options and decide then.

Announcements:
Hongmei announced the call for a focus group of graduate students from Career Services.
- Tiffany, Ashley and Dani expressed their interest.

Robin proposed to adjourn the meeting, Garth seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.35 PM.