**Graduate Student Senate**  
*Senate Meeting*  
**Thursday January 30 2014**  
**Campus Center 904**  

**Minutes**

Present:

**Officers:** Robin Anderson, Samantha Sterba.

**Senators:** Alexandra Prince, Chelsea Sams, Kathryn Grasha, Christoph Krumm, Robert Kane, Siyuan Yin, Garrett Gowen, Juan Manuel Ruiz-Hau, Javier Campos, Dave Brown, Kathryn Accurso, Daniel Morales, Brenda Muzeta, Gina Ocasion, Emily Campbell, Ian Coupal, Phillip Geer, Jonathan Dusenbury, Emily Pipes, Kimberley Sawyer, Michael Clauss, Travis Salley, Colleen Ashley, Jeffrey Stupak, Ragini Saira Malhotra, Cassaundra Rodriguez.

**Others:** Ghazah Abbasi (Sociology), Eric Hoyt (GEO co-chair), Santiago Vidales (UGCALS), David Vaillancourt (Associate Dean of Students), John McCarthy (Dean of the Graduate School).

Robin Anderson called the meeting to order at 1.15 PM and introduced Samantha Sterba as the new VP. Samantha expressed her happiness at being elected to the position and spoke about her plans for the semester.

Ian Coupal moved to approve the minutes of the last meeting and Kathryn Accurso seconded. The minutes were approved with 19 votes in favor and 2 abstentions.

Stefanie Robles updated the senate on the Joint Task Force on Resource Allocation. She read out a list of values that the JTFRA has come up with to provide a framework for the new funding models for the university, namely RCM. Their next meeting is on Feb 13. She said the GSS is trying to get the JTFRA to come to a senate meeting to talk to us about what RCM is and how it affects grad students. Stefanie also updated the senate on CDAC: the last meeting identified benchmarks for diversity, and the next meeting is on Feb 14.

**New Business:** Samantha, acting as the vice-chair of the Finance Committee: GSCA funding application: Cassaundra Rodriguez from GSCA described the organization and previous events held last semester, and explained the panel on teaching for which funding is being sought. Gina Ocasion asked if it is open to all students across disciplines or only to GSCA members. Cassaundra answered that it is open to all. Travis asked Samantha how much money is available for ad-hoc funding. Samantha replied that we had $4000 in total and only $600 has been used. Samantha moved to approve the Finance committee’s recommendations, Robin seconded. The motion passed with 21 votes in favor and 2 abstentions.

Motion to fund UGCALS launch event. Santiago Vidales spoke about the new GSO, its need, its scope and future plans. Robert Kane asked how the money would be spent.
Santiago answered it was for a social event and the budget was provided on the back. Mike Clauss asked how many students were in the LLC. Santiago said between 150-200 students. Samantha moved to accept the Finance committee’s recommendations and Robin seconded. The motion passed with 17 votes in favor and 3 abstentions.

UMPD resolution: Robin introduced the issue and read out the email from Chief of Police John Horvath that had precipitated the resolution. He also read out an emailed concern from a graduate student to the GSS. Robin moved to approve the resolution and Ragini Malhotra seconded.

Discussion: Christoph Krumm said it was not accurate to say that only skin color was mentioned in the email, since the police email has other descriptors such as clothing.

Ghazah Abbasi said the resolution does specify that the police email only mentions skin color, clothing and sex. Jonathan Dusenbury said the email particulars probably depend on the victim’s description and we cannot fault the police for this. Robert Kane, said the police priority was to find the suspect and not to play the racial game. Casaundra Rodriguez said it is not simply about this case, but we have to consider the broader implications of the matter. Colleen Ashley said it is important to get the victim’s POV, and if the description was in fact coming from the victim and maybe we can ask the police about this.

Garrett Gowen said the motion itself has nothing objectionable in it, and there’s nothing wrong with asking the UMPD to come and talk to us if we have concerns about their language. Jonathan said while he agrees with the issues in the motion, we should be more conciliatory and find out the reasons for their language. This motion risks provoking only contempt and anger from the police and may not address the issues concerned. Travis Salley said it does not seem appropriate to say the police is racist when this may be the only information that police has, and may backfire on us for denouncing the police as racist. Juan Manuel Ruiz-Hau asked if this is a pattern with the police profiling people of color, and why is it a problem for us only now, and what can this motion do that a simple conversation with the police would not. He said that ‘it’ in the email refers to the subject of the sentence in the mail, and not to a particular suspect. He said it might be better to meet with the chief in person rather than to pass such a strong resolution. Robert Kane said we should obtain a copy of the report and make sure we have all the facts before making a serious accusation.

Ghazah said this is an important conversation in any case, and the police in the US is, across the board, a racist institution, although we may think we live in a liberal bubble. She said for example the NYPD will not help unless one mention the race of a suspect in any complaint. Canan Cevik said that even if the intention of the police chief was not racist, the language of the email itself is a racist language and leaves one with an impression of black male violent stereotypes. Garrett said the motion as it stands is actually quite mild since it only addresses the issue at hand and does not say the UMPD itself is racist. Christoph disagreed and said the motion is quite strongly worded: it asks for a public apology and is turning this incident into a campus-wide pattern. He asked
how we can confirm that this was indeed a racist incident, and whether we need more data on whether the UMPD is pervasively racist and if this has been a pattern. Juan said he agreed with Christoph that the language used is very strong and we should strip the resolution of the section asking for a public apology and take a look at the policy that is responsible for the language of the email rather than condemning particular people in the UMPD.

Javier Campos said that the language of the email describing the suspect brings to mind the image of Trayvon Martin, and we should pay attention to these precedents when we look at the language. He added that the description is useless because it does not say anything about the suspect since all we know is that he was a black male and it could be any black male on campus.

Christoph said that Ghazah was right that this is a serious problem, but we don’t have any information about this and asking for an apology is not fair. We should get more information and we should open a conversation for the UMPD to discuss this issue. Jonathan agreed that the resolution is closing off the room for dialogue by asking for an apology. We should be creating the space for a dialogue rather than condemning the police.

Travis Salley said that he cannot consider this email as racist since the police is concerned with issues of public safety and not with racial profiling. Santiago said that this email is not in isolation, it is part of a pattern of police relations with students of color and should be seen in that wider context.

Emily Campbell said that the incident is already a campus issue because everyone got the email and is talking about it already. The email itself is aggressive, and we cannot respond to it conciliatorily. We cannot let public safety trump these other issues. Garrett agreed and said that this was a good time in terms of campus development. Garrett then moved to end debate and Colleen Ashley seconded. The motion passed with 10 votes in favor, 9 against and 4 abstentions. Debate was ended.

David Vaillancourt raised a point of order to explain the concept of ending debate and its consequences. Robin then proposed to reopen debate and Samantha seconded. With 15 votes in favor, the discussion was reopened.

Ragini said this was already a public issue and she has already had several conversations about this issue. The lack of data is not a problem since we do have a lot of evidence about the police and lack of data cannot be understood in such a narrow way. Javier agreed and said that we do have a lot of information and we should see it as an issue of safety for the black males on campus that are threatened by this email.

Stefanie said that the resolution does not say that the UMPD should not mention race but to acknowledge that other information (height, body type, etc.) was asked but not included or not available. Canan asked why asking for an apology from the police is such a big issue. Racism and sexism are not felt equally by all people and so they cannot be dealt
with equally. Dave Brown said we do need more information in the email so as not to stereotype black males.

Juan Manuel proposed an amendment to ask for more protocols that have determined the language used in the email and Phillip Geer seconded. As the mover of the original motion to approve the resolution, Robin accepted the amendment; as the seconder, Ragini said she would not. Christoph moved to end debate and put the amendment to a vote. There were 5 votes in favor of the amendment and 10 against, with 3 abstentions. The amendment was rejected.

Chelsea Sams proposed an amendment to reword the demand for an apology as a request and to request more information about the language in the email. Dave Brown seconded. The amendment was accepted. Robin moved to end debate and Samantha seconded. With 13 votes in favor, 3 against and 2 abstentions, debate was ended.

Robin called the question. There were 14 votes in favor, 4 against and 1 abstention. The resolution was adopted.

Announcements: Canan Cevik announced a project to send postcards from graduate women at UMass to Kurdish women political prisoners in Turkey, on the occasion of International Women’s Day. Eric Hoyt announced the next GEO meeting and kickoff party at ABC.

Robert Kane moved to adjourn and Dave Brown seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2.30 PM.