



Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

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MINUTES
Graduate & Professional Student Assembly
August 31st, 2015
165 McGraw Hall
5:30 – 7:00 P.M.

I. Welcome and Introductions

R. Walroth called the meeting to order at 5:32pm.

1. Introduction of voting members, 1 min.

Voting Members Present: C. Aurand, C. Benson, T. Bollu, J. Goldberg, M. Jodlowski, A. Molitoris, W. Nicholson, N. Rogers, K. Schlauraff, T. Snider, T. Bernard, R. Walroth, C. Wong, C. Yao

Voting Members Absent: R. Kreis, J. Veintimilla

II. Approval of the Minutes

1. April 21, 2014, 1 min.
Minutes were approved as printed.

III. Presentations

1. President Garrett, 30 min.

President Garrett started her presentation by stating graduate programs are an essential part of University success and as President, she is committed to improving student experience. The administration will work together and with students to ensure professional development. Cornell graduate rate is 74% compared to a national average of 54% and that is because of faculty and student excellence. She is also impressed with GPSA's effort to recognize faculty members and the 5-year strategic plan that provides a basis for addressing important areas such as well being for students with families and mental health. She recognized the TND (Towards New Destinations) initiative that continues to improve the experience of students with different identities. She said the University would expand the annual budget doctoral fellowships to \$25 million. The annual budget for childcare grants will also be increased from \$15K to \$25K. Cornell is committed to create a rewarding living environment including addressing critical apartment needs. The rate for Research Assistant

stipend will be equal to Teaching Assistant stipend, starting this semester. The University will devote more opportunities to facilitate graduate student interaction with alumni. They will also develop interaction between the students and the trustees to increase trustee understanding of student life.

She wants to stress the meaningfulness of shared governance and encourage the executive leadership to meet with Dean Barbara Knuth and use her position as a liaison between students and the administration. She stressed that educational experience is of utmost important and she would like to lead Cornell to be the leading university in the 21st century.

The floor was then opened to questions from the students. She was asked about workers' compensation and mental health and she deferred the question to Dean Knuth. She said if injury meets New York guidelines, the University would compensate the medical expenses.

C. Yao asked about her opinions on a past resolution regarding divestment from companies using fossil fuels. The committee will address board of trustees in October and talk to them about divestment. President Garrett said she does not support divestment. Divesting would lead to reduced returns that will impair the financial budget of the University and she has a personal responsibility to maximize return. The University cannot afford to have every policy issue dictate investment policies since that would be an irresponsible decision.

She was asked about health care initiatives at Cornell and the change in health fee policy. The administration is looking carefully at the health fee and how to harmonize that across the entire student population, including international students. They will decide over the next few months if the two populations, students who opt in and who opt out, can be treated equally.

For more information on her presentation, refer to the article in Cornell Chronicle:

<http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2015/08/garrett-highlights-initiatives-progress-gpsa-meeting>

IV. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates, 10 min.

1. *Executive Committee*: The executive committee will be adding a 4th person to the committee – VP Communication. This individual will be elected and responsible for facilitating conversation between executive committee and GPSA members.
2. *Operations*: N. Rogers said the executive committee has been working with the Office of the Assemblies to compile a list of the 68 internal committees, which form the backbone of the GPSA. The Operations committee itself consists of UA reps, committee chairs, VP operations, and EVP. There is also an urgent need to staff the CJC graduate student representatives since their meetings start soon.
3. *Appropriations*: Updates shared during discussion of R. 2.
4. *Communications*: Committee does not have a chair.
5. *Finance Commission*: The deadline to apply for funding is last Friday of August.
6. *Student Advocacy*: The Chair is looking to increase awareness of the advocacy committee and for GPSA members to join the committee.
7. *Diversity and International Students*: The committee meets once a month and is combined with the GPCI. They are looking for new members and will discuss what initiatives to tackle during the semester at the next meeting.
8. *Programming Board*: The Chair will send a survey to all students to gauge interest in events.

V. New Business

1. Election of masters voting members, 10 min.

There are 19 voting members on the GPSA and 2 of these must be Masters Students to give that constituency a voice on the assembly. One of the 2 must be from the engineering department. Since there were no nominations for the engineering-specific seat, it went to at-large masters students. Ruben Abramov and Khalid Ladha were nominated and elected to the positions.

2. Election of Faculty Awards Chair, 5 min.

D. Citron described the responsibility of the Faculty Awards Chair. It is all about enthusiastically and publically recognizing faculty members who go above and beyond what is required of them. The committee looks for nominees in February and decides winners in a following meeting followed by organizing a party for the winners. Cassandra Benson was nominated and elected as Chair.

3. For Introduction: GPSA Resolution 1: Resolution Approving the GPSA Charter and Bylaws for 2015-2016, 10 min.

R. Walroth presented the resolution and said Charter must be approved at by the second GPSA meeting of the year. The position of VP Communications was included in the Charter through an amendment. This resolution will be discussed and voted on at the next meeting.

4. For Introduction: GPSA Resolution 2: Resolution Approving GPSA Budget for 2015-2016, 5 min.

S. Chandrasekaran is the chair of the Appropriations Committee which also makes him the default treasurer of the GPSA. 2015 is a byline0funding year and applications for funding are due in two Fridays. The committee will present allocations at the 5th meeting of the semester and all voting members are required to attend the meeting. The end goal is to decide the graduate student activity fee based on the allocations.

He then presented the GPSA budget including the rollover, around \$19,000, and total allocation, around \$32,000. Funding for the various committees comes from the previous year rollover. He also showed the breakdown of the funding for each external committee. Approved. Motion to extend the meeting.

VI. Breakout Session

1. Learning about GPSA committees by division: Humanities, Social Sciences, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Professional Schools: 20 min.

VII. Open Forum, 4 min.

N. Rogers shared information about the BEAR (Be Engaged and Responsible) Walk and encouraged graduate students to participate.

Andrew Crook shared information about the CGSU and a draft memorandum of understanding that the CGSU has proposed to the executive of the GPSA .

*Respectfully submitted,
Aastha Wadhwa*