



Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

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MINUTES
Graduate & Professional Student Assembly
November 23rd, 2015
Room 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: R. Abramov, C. Aurand, C. Benson, T. Bollu, J. Goldberg, S. Hesse, M. Jodlowski, K. Ladha, A. Molitoris, N. Rogers, K. Schlauraff, T. Snider, T. Bernard, J. Veintimilla, R. Walroth, C. Wong, C. Yao

Voting Members Absent: W. Nicholson

II. Approval of the Minutes

1. October November 7th, 2015, 1 min.

C. Yao asked to capitalize S. Hesse's name and to correct S. Ventimilla's name. The category of voting members attendance was also corrected. Minutes were approved as amended.

III. Presentations

1. Dean Knuth, 30 min.

Dean Knuth started her presentation by thanking the Assembly for having her. She shared the stipend recommendation for 2017 the Provost will present to the Board of Trustees. The Graduate School arrived at the recommendation by sharing information with the students, the GC, faculty directors, and the governing body of the graduate school and receiving feedback on stipend rates. Cost of living in Ithaca is also taken into consideration when deciding the recommendation. They are also keeping an eye on the graduate student debt. She also shared comparative data of peer institutes. Cornell is at the median of its peer group for RA stipend rates. The minimum stipend rate for 9 months is \$24,658. Other facts she shared were that 96% of continuing doctorate students have summer funding. She then asked the students for any feedback or other factors that should be taken into consideration.

N. Rogers said parking is not part of the stipends to which Dean Knuth said that will be taken into consideration after observing most students had cars and pay parking fees. Another member

brought up travelling for conferences and the fee for a bus pass. C. Yao brought up dental and vision fees. A. Waymack brought up medical insurance costs and mental health issues.

Dean Knuth was also asked to discuss expected hours of work corresponding to these stipend rates. She said if students are concerned or are asked to work more than expected, they should contact the Graduate School. There are grievance procedures listed on the graduate website that ensure students can safely share problems and complaints. The members thanked Dean Knuth for coming to the meeting and presenting. If people have other questions, bring them to R. Walroth and he will forward them to the administration.

IV. Reports of Officers and Committee Updates, 20 min.

1. **Executive Committee** – The committee met with the administration about the Maplewood construction. Input on the topic was gathered from the executive committee and individual members of the graduate community who live on campus living. They addressed configuration of the apartments and the rent.
They also went to the Ivy+ summit and shared notes with peer schools on their governance issues. They will talk about these ideas at the next meeting.
2. **Operations** – N. Rogers said 75% of the committees are staffed. There are 4 new committees – Public and Global Activity Committee, Online Education and Technology Committee, Admission and Financial Aid Committee for the undergraduate population, and Capital Planning Committee - that need graduate student representation. SA and UA are looking for a graduate student liaison.
3. **Communications** – S. Hesse sent an email to all the chiefs of communications. They will meet early December and will start creating graduate student handbook to pass on to new graduate students as a guide and a way to publicize the GPSA.
4. **Appropriations** – Will discuss updates during New Business.
5. **Faculty Awards** – No updates.
6. **Finance Commission** – They are working on reviewing guidelines and coming up with a new set of rules. They appreciate any help on creating the new guidelines. They are also in contact with Dean Knuth to ask which departments and fields are spending money efficiently. Special projects deadline is this week to request funding for December events.
7. **Student Advocacy** – The committee is working on the issue of food insecurity and is trying to come with solutions to address housing problems. They are also discussing topics for Dine and Discuss.
8. **Diversity and International Students** – The committee had a diversity inclusion dinner where Dean Knuth spoke about the Cornell climate survey. Working groups broke out to discuss experiences and how graduate school and committee can address these issues. The committee is also working on housing issues.
9. **Programming Board** – No updates.

V. New Business

1. Approval of Activity Fee, 30 min.

- a. **Cornell Cinema** – The executive committee and S. Chandrasekaran conducted a survey of voting members and a graduate student survey that is approaching a 10% response rate. Eight out of 18 voting member do want the allocation to be more than \$10.30, whereas 6 felt it shouldn't be below \$10.90. It was difficult to reach a consensus. They finally arrived at an average value to represent how students feel and this modified recommendation was \$10.54. The recommendation required a simple majority to pass. If it failed, Cornell Cinema would receive no funding from GPSA.
Out of the graduate students, while 80% of graduate students said they valued the cinema, only 40% had used it in the past. Only a small percentage uses it regularly. The executive will present student survey results at next meeting. R. Walroth motioned to open discussion on the recommendation. D. Citron asked where the decrease of \$.10 went. There was a motion to call the vote and the recommendation passed by a vote of 14-0-2.
- b. **GPSA/Grocery Store** – 25% of graduate and professional students said they do feel food insecure, cut or skip meals due to financial concerns and 20% said would use the grocery store. A. Molitoris, the VET school representative, said a majority of students will not use grocery store due to lack of parking near Anabel Taylor. N. Rogers he has concerns about hours over summer and breaks as well. The money will be initially allocated to GPSA and they will have control over who to allocate it to further. If the grocery store looks like it is not working out as well as planned next year, the Assembly could cut its funding which will result in a surplus for the GPSA.
S. Chandrashekharan said clauses for reallocation can be included in the documents before approving them. A member said the graduate students should not fund the store unless they know it will be in service over the summer. Another member said the money given to establish the store seems like a good investment even if they pay off is for a small number of food insecure students, especially since the cost per person is not large. The pricing target is lower than Wegman's prices. The grocery store team will partner with food distributors to ensure low prices. There was a motion to vote and the recommendation passed by 15-0-1.
- c. **GPSAFC** – There was a motion to vote on the recommendation and it passed by 15-0-1.

VI. Open Forum, 4 min.

R. Walroth adjourned the meeting at 7:04pm.

*Sincerely submitted,
Aastha Wadhwa*