

Graduate and Professional Student Association
Office of the President
Report to the GPSA Assembly
September 25, 2009

Dear GPSA Assembly,

I hope you are all enjoying the start of the Fall semester. If you have questions about any specific part of this report, please feel free to ask or e-mail me so that I may clarify or provide additional information.

Financial State of GPSA

As President of GPSA, it is my duty to regularly update the Assembly as to the financial state of affairs of the association. I will spend some time in each of my reports enumerating the financial state of GPSA. The current state of financial affairs at GPSA is fine. The executive committee has not yet received the Fall enrollment report indicating the total allocation of Student Fee money, but we do believe that our allocation will increase from what it was last year. Additionally, there have not been any major purchases not in line with budget items since the last meeting. I will regularly update the Assembly if our financial situation changes dramatically.

Committee and Board Appointments

I have made the following committee and board appointments since the last Assembly Meeting:

Alice E. Veksler – Student Recreation Board of Governors
Jeffrey Liao – Student Recreation Board of Governors
Andre Denham – Student Technology Fee Board
Jonathon Nield – Intercampus Transportation Board
Michael Rutkowski – University Hearing Board
Assen Kokalov – University Hearing Board
Kendra Knight – University Hearing Board
Debjani Chakravarty – University Hearing Board
Matthew Sanborn – Parking Citations Appeals Board
Rukmani Kasiraman – Parking Citations Appeals Board

I need to fill the following board seats:

Career Services Advisory Committee – 1 seat
Martin Luther King, Jr. Planning Committee – 1 seat
Parking Citations Appeals Board – 1 seat
Residency Reclassification Advisory Board – 1 seat
University Hearing Board – 1 seat

If you are interested in serving on any of these University-wide boards, please let me know ASAP.

Graduate Leadership Summit

At the time of writing this report (9/18/09), the graduate leadership summit has about 78 people signed up to attend. I will provide an oral report of the actual summit during the assembly meeting, as the summit takes place right before the 9.25.09 assembly meeting.

Meeting Reports

August 25, 2009 – Meeting with President Crow and Vice President Rund:

During this meeting, President Crow discussed some of the major funding hurdles of the university, especially the fact that stimulus dollars will run out in about 2 years time. The 5 student leaders along with the Arizona Students' Association have decided to work on a proposed statewide ballot initiative that would guarantee some steady stream of funding for the University System.

August 28, 2009 – Meeting with President Crow:

I attended a baseball game with President Crow and presented the list of issues and needs to him. The President was incredibly responsive to our needs and indicated that he would be more than happy to work with us on accomplishing some of the smaller goals while we could present more information to him on some of the larger goals (especially TA pay – see below).

September 3, 2009 – University Senate Welcome Back Breakfast:

I was invited to the University Senate to give a short speech on graduate student issues and what GPSA is doing this year. I was the only ASU student leader invited to give that presentation, as GPSA is working toward representing all graduate students, unlike the undergraduates (as a special note, the University Senate is university-wide and no longer campus-specific)

September 3, 2009 – Cathy McGonigle, Arizona Board of Regents:

I was interviewed by Cathy regarding a performance evaluation of President Crow.

September 11, 2009 – Dr. Joan Brett, Graduate College

Sarah Riforgiate and I met with Dr. Brett from the Graduate College to discuss the possibility of working more closely on professional development issues for graduate students. We also provided her with a report generated from the GPSA Focus Groups (see attachment)

September 11, 2009 – Arizona Students' Association Meeting

September 14, 2009 – Drs. Rund, Allison, and Webber:

I met with Dean Allison, Dr. Rund, and Dr. Webber regarding GPSA and some of the support issues that were brought up with the President. One of the productive things that came from

this meeting was that the graduate college is going to look into problems with Programs of Studies (specifically, how long it takes for approval in the graduation office).

September 14, 2009 – Council of Presidents Meeting:

I met with the other student leaders about a variety of issues, especially the health board and the state-wide ballot initiative. We also decided to place appointments to the Technology Board and the Transportation Board.

September 15, 2009 – Meeting regarding West Campus Space

Alice and I met with a furniture designer to discuss the West Campus GSC and get some quotes on furniture for the space. We are hoping the space will be open by the end of October.

September 15, 2009 – USG Senate Meeting

September 16, 2009 – University Student Health Board Meeting

September 17, 2009 – Meeting with Dr. Rund:

September 17, 2009 – Meeting with Dan Ashlock:

I discussed the ASASU election with Dan and how we can complete the election prior to the Assembly meeting .

The following meetings have happened between the time that I generated this report and the Assembly Meeting:

September 19, 2009 – ASU Football Game with President Crow

September 21, 2009 – Meeting with ASU State Relations Director

September 23, 2009 – Arizona Students' Association (Flagstaff, AZ)

September 24, 2009 – Arizona Board of Regents Meeting (Flagstaff, AZ)

September 25, 2009 – ASU Graduate Leadership Summit.

GPSA Ad-hoc Committee on TA Pay

Currently, there are 2 individuals who have signed up to be on the Ad-hoc committee for TA Pay. This committee will work with both the graduate college and President Crow's office to generate a competitive analysis of TA pay at ASU compared to our Peer institutions. The goal will be to get the President to ensure that ASU is competitive with our peers. If you want to serve on this committee, please let me know ASAP.

Report on the GPSA Focus Groups

Please see the report, attached from Sarah Riforgiate on the GPSA Focus Groups. The information is incredibly interesting.

Graduate Students Bill of Rights

I would encourage the Assembly to discuss the Graduate Student Bill of Rights in Graduate Student Forum. I have attached a copy of that Bill or Rights to my report as a discussion point. Is this something that GPSA wants to re-adopt and present back to the ASU Administration? The original bill was presented and approved by the GPSA Assembly in 2004 as "Assembly Bill #18."

On behalf of everyone in the GPSA Executive Committee, I am incredibly excited for the great things that GPSA will be doing this year. To the assembly and everyone else in GPSA, thank you for all your hard work and keep it up!

Respectfully Submitted,

Justin P. Boren

President

Graduate and Professional Student Association

Arizona State University

Report Generated 09-18-2009

GPSA Focus Groups – Demographic Information – August 2009

- Nineteen total participants

- Average student participant age was 29.18, with an age range of 23-40 years old

- Degree type included two Masters students and 17 PhD students

- Colleges Represented:
 - 3 Design and Arts
 - 4 Education
 - 3 Engineering
 - 1 Graduate
 - 8 Liberal Arts and Sciences

- University Employment included 15 Teaching Assistant/Associates, one Research Assistant/Associate and one staff member (two participants did not answer)

- Year in Program: Five students in their second year, five in their third year, five in their fourth year, two in their fifth year, one in their sixth year, and one in their seventh year

- A majority of the students were not international students (14), however there were four international students (one participant did not answer)

- Ethnicity was self identified with two reporting Asian, one reporting Black, nine reporting Caucasian, three reporting Latino/a, one reporting Filipino, one reporting mixed (two participants did not answer)

GPSA Focus Group Sessions with Graduate Students – August, 2009

GPSA conducted three focus groups in August 2009 to identify specific issues at Arizona State University pertaining to graduate students. Focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes and allowed groups of six to eight graduate students an open forum to discuss topics concerning current challenges to graduate student life, current University resources that are valued, new University resources that would be helpful, and graduation and professional development resources.

Primary concerns with graduate student life at Arizona State University focused on four areas: communication, resources, teaching, and professional development. Graduate students were also grateful for many of the University resources that work well. A more detailed discussion of concerns and positive resources follows.

Communication:

In regards to communication, graduate students desired straightforward explanations of University changes resulting from budget and financing concerns based on the current economy. Experiences from last year included misinformation and rumors that were not counterproductive. Furthermore, because of administrative changes, graduate students felt it would be helpful to have procedures and job responsibilities written down, so when staff members changed, information was not lost.

In addition, international students expressed concern that the written policies and information available to graduate students applies primarily to United States citizens. There is a need for better communication about international student procedures and resources.

Resources:

Resources desired by graduate students included both small and large requests. Simple things like access to computers, printers and copy machines to perform their TA/RA work at no charge would make their lives easier (some student already have these available). Graduate students were dismayed to learn that testing services was moved off campus, because many of them used this service and will have difficulty going to the off campus location. There was also concern about computer center and library hours being reduced due to budget constraints.

Larger resource desires included subsidizing the new Light Rail fee, providing dental and mental health coverage, supplying laptop computers and Kindle Readers while graduate students are employed at ASU, and increasing TA stipends. Access to grant funding information and University employment opportunities, either through improved communication outlets or making these opportunities available, would be helpful.

In addition, graduate students felt that access to professors became difficult with furlough days and also that graduate students were not “required”, but “expected” to support their departments and students to make up for faculty days off. Inadvertently, furlough days placed a large burden on graduate students who were already working long hours and expected to “pick up the slack.”

Teaching:

In regards to teaching and TA positions, there was agreement across the graduate student groups that the University should work with departments to ensure quality teaching for all students. Although the TAD program provides an overview of procedures and University policies, it does not help with teaching in the classroom. While some Departments provide excellent training for new TAs, others are sorely lacking and provide no training at all. If it is truly a goal of the University to grow and continue to provide positive educational experiences, teaching requires more attention in terms of training and mentorship. Furthermore, graduate students across focus groups communicated a desire to teach effectively and relate to their students, but were concerned that time spent teaching was not recognized or rewarded.

Graduation and Professional Development:

Finally, graduate students desired tools to help them move through the graduation process more smoothly. Although the Graduate College provides deadline information, graduate students didn't feel they had a clear picture of what the graduation process involved and how to plan time for graduation requirements. Furthermore, there was a great deal of frustration over the formatting process with several graduate students saying not to bother to try to format, just pay someone to do this work. A formatting template or workshops on formatting might help to reduce this frustration.

In terms of professional development, some departments seemed more helpful to graduate students than others. There was a clear desire to have more mentorship opportunities, including professional development and training by department members. Some departments were described as providing

opportunities including workshops, graduate students involved in job talks, and research partnerships with professors. Some graduate students, however, were not exposed to any mentorship and felt they had to do everything on their own. In addition, some students felt trapped in working with one professor when they desired to work with many professors and on multiple projects.

Existing University Resources:

Graduate students were quick to recognize many resources they were grateful for at the University. In particular, there were positive conversations about the library including access to journals and books, interlibrary loans, and excellent experiences with library employees. Technological support services and technology in the classrooms was also recognized for being very helpful and for making teaching easier in the classrooms. GPSA received praise for supporting graduate students and recognized especially for providing travel and professional grants, research grants, and Teaching Excellence awards. In addition, the Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence (CLTE) was commended both for its useful workshops and for assisting TAs in course development and improvement.

Graduate and Professional Student Bill of Rights

Arizona State University

Introduction:

This document was designed to be a general guide in order to inform graduate students of their rights and responsibilities in broad terms. Graduate students are defined as all graduate, professional and post-baccalaureate students of Arizona State University. Many of the items contained within are already specified as rights or responsibilities of students in official university literature. Footnotes identifying the previously published University literature that enumerates these rights are not provided since such references would assuredly be incomplete (due to the manifold nature of the documents that describe the University's policies, rules, and bylaws). Thus, an exhaustive survey of these rights and responsibilities in order to identify those that are truly novel has not been undertaken. This document is not intended to apply to undergraduate students. Although many of the rights and responsibilities described herein apply equally well to undergraduates, some do not. A graduate student is at times educator and researcher as well as pupil. This tripartite existence, together with the exceptional influence of a faculty advisor or mentor upon the life of a graduate student, would seem to demand a unique set of rights and responsibilities. Thus, ASU graduate students have drafted this document as an attempt to satisfy this desideratum.

This document was also constructed to promote a more productive climate between our faculty, and us, and to define our role in the university as a whole. These are basic rights common to all graduate students. They form a foundation upon which faculty and students can build a genuine intellectual community.

We, the graduate students of ASU, claim the rights enumerated below:

I. Equal Educational Opportunity:

A. Graduate students have a right to equal educational opportunity and to protection against discrimination based on race, color, gender, religion, age, physical disability, sexual preference, orientation, national origin, political ideology, and political activity.

1. The university should provide graduate students fair treatment in all learning endeavors within the institution, including, but not limited to, course assignments, course grades, research activities, access to financial aid, and recommendations for employment.

2. The university should create the conditions and the atmosphere of nondiscrimination, irrespective of a graduate student's political or ideological beliefs and practices.

3. In general, academic merit should guide departmental allocations of financial assistance and recommendations for employment. However, we emphatically support affirmative action programs and other federal regulations which promote sexual and racial equality.

B. Graduate students have a right to be respected as individuals of merit and as junior colleagues of faculty. Graduate students are to be considered members of a scholarly community, and as such, they have a right to collegial and respectful treatment by faculty members. The student's vulnerability must not be exploited in any way by faculty, administration, or staff.

C. Given that Graduate students have the same rights and obligations as all citizens, they are free as other citizens to express their views and to participate in the political processes of the academic community and the community at large.

II. Participation in Department Governance:

A. Graduate students have a right to participate in policy decisions that affect the conditions and quality of their academic life. This requires meaningful representation in department and program governance.

1. Within each department an elected graduate student representative shall be invited to attend regularly scheduled faculty meetings for their respective department. Representatives may also be invited to meetings of various department committees when appropriate.

2. Within each program an elected graduate student representative shall be present in the decision-making processes relative to their program.

3. Graduate students should have the opportunity annually to evaluate their professors in writing, without fear of retribution.

B. Graduate students have a right to speak as teaching and/or research colleagues in university or college decision-making bodies.

C. Graduate students have a right to representation at the campus, local, state and national levels in order to advocate and advance the interests of graduate students.

III. Educational Records:

A. Graduate students have a right to the privacy and confidentiality of their educational records.

1. Graduate student files and all other written information possessed by the department about graduate students must be treated with confidentiality. Departments should provide security over access to these materials.

2. Departments must make provisions for graduate students to see their personal files in accordance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

3. Graduate students have a right to know, upon request, what authorized personnel have access to their file.

B. Graduate students have a right to reasonable confidentiality in their communications with professors.

1. In general, a professor should not discuss a student's performance with other students. .

2. Discussion among faculty of a student's performance should be of a professional nature and should be limited to the student's academic

performance and fitness as a graduate student. The substance of the

communication should be based on a need to know relevant information.

IV. Graduate Studies Program:

A. Graduate students have a right to full disclosure of information about their standing in graduate studies, about financial assistance, and about prospects for employment.

1. The department shall provide new and continuing graduate students with information about the general financial aid picture and the prospects for continuation of funding. This should include information on the number and types of financial aid allocations in the department for the prior year.

2. The department shall adopt policy statements for the allocation of financial aid to graduate students, and these policy statements shall be communicated to new and continuing students. Statements shall explain how to apply for financial aid, the criteria used for granting aid, the deadlines for applications and decision, the "good standing" criteria used for continuation of funding, and the standards that will be applied in decisions concerning curtailment of funds.

3. Scholarships and assistantships for teaching or for research shall carry statements which specify in clear language the period of coverage, the dollar amount, how funds will be paid, and the duties of assistants, including the weekly hours of work and the specific responsibilities to be carried out. Any benefits included in the assistance package should be noted (tax status, tuition remission, medical coverage, etc.). Special or emergency obligations, such as class coverage in the event of illness or other unexpected absence by instructors, shall be addressed as well. Provisions for reasonable and timely notice to the graduate student shall be provided.

4. The placement of graduate students shall be the goal of all faculty members, and it is commonly understood that every faculty member will strive to assist placing her/his advisees. In addition, the department shall provide graduate students with information about the job market. The department chairman shall see to it that compiled information received concerning jobs will be displayed on a bulletin board. The department should retain an accessible, centrally located file of the job vacancies that come to the attention of the department and the members of the faculty. It is desirable for the department to release annual statements to faculty and graduate students on the placement record of the department, and periodic statements during the year about specific vacancies that are available.

5. The department shall provide graduate students with timely notice of their standing in graduate study. Notice of performance in work, courses and preliminary examinations shall be provided in writing in a timely manner. Inadequate performance, such as low grades, incompletes, poor work performance and poor or failing performance on preliminary examinations shall be mentioned and constructive support provided soon after their occurrence. Students shall be informed how such performance will affect their standing in the program, especially continuation of financial assistance, and what they must do to correct inadequacies.

B. Graduate Students have a right to sufficient teacher training, ongoing professional support, and formal assessment and evaluation as Teaching Assistants.

C. Graduate students have a right to clear and specific written requirements for achieving an advanced degree.

1. These requirements should be provided to graduate students upon their admission into a graduate program and/or emphasis.

2. No changes in degree requirements should affect students previously accepted into the graduate program and/or emphasis except at their option.

3. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students have a right to know and should be informed of the “normative time to degree” and “average time to degree” within a specific graduate program and/or emphasis.

4. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students have a right to know a program's and/or emphasis' attrition rate if available and the predominant reasons for lack of program completion except in instances where confidentiality is threatened. Student access to statistical information on graduate programs should not interfere with the privacy rights of other students.

D. Graduate students have a right to a non-biased evaluation of their progress toward achieving an advanced degree. The criteria should be clearly understood by the graduate advisor and student.

1. If a graduate student requests an explanation, reasons for unsatisfactory performance on qualifying or comprehensive examinations should be given in writing.

E. Graduate students have a right to substantive feedback and regular guidance concerning their academic performance.

1. Graduate students and their thesis/dissertation director should arrive at and maintain a mutually agreeable schedule of evaluative/supervisory conferences.

2. Graduate students must be notified in writing of unsatisfactory performance before any attempt begins to dismiss them from a graduate program.

3. Only the dean of the College of Graduate Studies can dismiss a student from a graduate program for academic reasons and normally only upon the recommendation of the program. Graduate students have the right to appeal for cause any decision affecting their academic standing as a graduate student. Cause excludes grade appeals, which are under the purview of the MTSU Grade Appeals Committee. The burden of responsibility rests with the appellant to provide a timely, cogent, and convincing written documentation of the facts upon which the appeal is based. Further information may be obtained from the appeals document from the Graduate Council, Section III.

F. Graduate students have a right to refuse to perform tasks if those tasks are not closely related to their academic or professional development.

G. Graduate students have a right to review vitae of faculty members within their degree program/departments who are qualified/eligible to serve on their graduate committee. These vitae should be made available at the time the students are accepted into their program to aid them in selecting their committee members.

H. Graduate students have a right to appropriate study and lab space.

V. Research Performance:

A. Graduate students have a right to fair and equitable treatment for work performed on faculty-sponsored research.

1. Students shall be given full credit for the work and for the ideas they bring to faculty-sponsored research projects. Faculty must not represent the work of students as their own.

2. Faculty shall reach clear understandings with graduate students regarding their responsibilities and rights on research projects. There should be open and honest communication about the tasks graduate students are expected to perform, when students shall have access to data for theses and dissertations, and the conditions under which graduate students shall receive joint or sole authorship on publications that emerge from the research.

VI. Complaints and Grievances:

A. Graduate students have a right to file complaints against the university, college, and department or members thereof, and to petition for redress of grievances.

1. The department shall provide for procedures of due process, by which graduate students can lodge complaints and obtain redress of grievances. Graduate students shall have access to the complaint filing process, which is consistent with department and university rules and regulations.

2. Where a graduate student presents reasonable evidence regarding misconduct by a faculty member or probable cause that such misconduct took place, the department shall provide a way by which the student can avoid working directly with the accused faculty member.

3. Students should have access to information concerning appeal procedures beyond the department, by which graduate students can seek a rehearing of their grievances (When the departmental procedures have been exhausted).

B. Graduate students have a right to file a grievance with the appropriate state, regional, or national association. If one of these associations acts on the complaint, ultimately it will be necessary to contact the department chairperson and the faculty member(s) concerned in order to investigate the case. Efforts will be made to resolve the dispute and protect the student's position within the department. In addition, efforts will be made to play a conciliatory and mediational role by the body taking the matter under its purview.

C. Graduate students have a right to organize independently in promotion of our interests as graduate students.

D. Graduate Students have a right to be free from any form of reprisal for activities related to organizing graduate students or promoting their interests.

VII. Employment Equality:

A. Graduate students have a right to work in an environment free of exploitation, intimidation, harassment and discrimination based on characteristics such as gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, religious or political beliefs and affiliations.

B. Graduate students have a right to a fair living wage.

C. Graduate students have a right to work under clear, equitable and mutually agreed-upon job descriptions and working conditions.

D. Graduate students have a right to an impartial, just, and mutually agreed-upon set of procedures for the swift resolution of workplace grievances.

E. Graduate students have a right to adequate parental leave and child care benefits.

F. Graduate students have a right to remission of tuition and the cost of books and educational materials (when serving as a TA, RA, or GA).

G. Graduate students have a right to bargain collectively.

H. Graduate students have a right to adequate health care which will meet the needs of graduate student employees, their dependents, and their spouses and/or mates, regardless of a formal marriage.

I. Graduate students have a right to work at teaching or research jobs related to the student's field or area of interest. These jobs should not be so time-consuming as to deter the student from fully pursuing his/her educational objectives.

J. Graduate students have a right to workers' compensation for job-related illness or injury.

K. Graduate students have a right to employment security for the duration of a particular job assignment.

L. Graduate students have a right to appropriate workspace, sufficient technological resources and adequate clerical staff and supplies.

VIII. Catch All Phrase:

A. Graduate students reserve those rights not specifically enumerated in this document, but otherwise specified by the university, the academic community, or the nation.