

# **Boston University Graduate Student Organization**

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## **Minutes** February 6, 2012

### **1. Voting to accept new departmental numbers and shift departmental voting representation**

New departmental numbers were presented and accepted by vote. There are currently 2,027 graduate students in the GRS. Within the GSO, departmental representation is on the basis of 1 representative per 50 students.

It was clarified that travel grant eligibility is based the attendance at GSO meetings by any single member of the department. Departments with multiple reps are underrepresented when only one member of the department attends, but the presence of only one member is required to remain travel grant eligible.

### **2. Announcements and Treasury Report**

#### **Announcements**

An announcement was made listing the upcoming conferences GSO is co-sponsoring. Reps were encouraged to share these events and dates in their departments. An email will be sent with all the information.

- Archaeology, February, 17-19
- Musicology, February 18
- International Relations, February 24-25

It was announced that anyone wishing to subscribe to the GSO calendar can go to the GSO website and subscribe to the Google calendar. Doing so will enable grad students to link it to whatever calendar they already use.

#### **Treasure's Report**

It was reported that a mix-up occurred in the payment of the Musicology conference co-sponsorship in Fiscal Year 2011. This resulted in \$400 of Fiscal Year 2012's budget being used to pay that amount. The GRS administrator was able to provide GSO with an extra \$400 for this year's (2012) budget, effectively negating the error.

- YTD Spending and/or Funds Encumbered: **\$6,101.86**
- Current Balance: **\$8,898.14**

Possible spending on the End of Winter Reception, GSO meeting costs, and Pub Nights, in the Spring Semester was estimated at **\$8000**.

Without trimming the amount of funds for these events, **\$900** was uncommitted at the time of the report.

### **3. Cosponsored event application**

An application for co-sponsorship was considered for the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Graduate Student Conference in African Studies, March 30-31.

GSO co-sponsored the same event in 2011 for \$535. This year's request was for \$500 to put toward the cost of the keynote dinner. The requested amount represented 63% of the cost of the dinner and 23% of the overall cost of the conference (\$2200).

A conference representative stressed the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary milestone and the interdisciplinary nature of the conference (three GRS departments are represented on the organizing committee). The keynote presenter and anticipated participation from BU graduate students and other universities were also described.

**Discussion** included whether GSO anticipated additional applicants in the Spring Semester. Another event may apply but all the events funded in 2010-11 have already applied. The musicology conference held in May 2011 was moved to February this year, so they applied for funds earlier than they did a year ago.

**\$500 for the African Studies conference was approved.** The clarity of the application was appreciated and it was commented that it could be a model for future applicants to consult in completing their applications.

#### **4. Healthcare Survey Results and Other Issues**

The head of the healthcare committee opened a discussion of the current state of GSO health insurance advocacy and the information gleaned from the recent healthcare survey.

##### **DENTAL**

The desire for dental and vision coverage was noted. In terms of dental it was stated that there are limited options for dental coverage for a population like graduate students.

A low-cost plan affordable to students is unlikely to provide very much coverage. An example given, was a plan that cost \$350 and then covered up to \$750. The question was posed: should we have a 'bad' plan (providing very little coverage) or no plan at all?

**The GSO affirmed a preference that the BU offer a dental plan rather than no plan.**

The BU Dental School Plan was also discussed. In the first year there the fee is +/- \$300 and around \$275 in subsequent years. That annual fee covers a cleaning every six months and all cavities. Additional procedures (e.g., a root canal) are billed, but usually at a lower rate than outside dentists.

Service is provided by Dental School students, working under faculty supervision. According to the survey, satisfaction with student dentists is mixed, with some negative experiences prominent in the survey.

**It was generally agreed that the BU Dental School option should be better publicized to GRS students.**

**Questions** were asked about the % of undergrads that purchase a dental plan through BU (unknown, but thought to be modest) and whether there was any leverage to seek further discounts for students on billable procedures conducted through the BU Dental School program.

##### **HEALTH INSURANCE**

The desire was stated that BU consider providing the PLUS plan rather than the BASIC. The BASIC plan covers 80% of costs that would be covered at 100% in the PLUS plan. For students with serious illnesses or accidents, this difference could be very significant.

The PLUS plan has some vision coverage and better prescription drug coverage. All students at the Med Campus are on PLUS.

Dr. McBride (SHS) has suggested GRS upgrade everyone to the PLUS plan and encourages advocacy in this direction.

Past GSO leaders shared that improving health insurance coverage was nearly completed several years ago before the financial crisis wrecked budgets. At the time, this was supported by some of the Deans, including Dean Whittaker. SAGE also pushed for better health insurance. What was on the table was a choice between a) all grad students receiving BASIC + Dental **or** b) all grad students receiving PLUS, with no dental.

**The suggestion was made that GSO re-shoulder active advocacy for better health insurance through center action and organizing in each department. This was favorably received.**

**Question:** The issue of coverage for long-term domestic partners of graduate students was raised. It was pointed out that spouses can buy into the BASIC plan, but not the PLUS plan. A specific sense of criteria required to qualify as ‘spouse’ was not known/available. It was also not known whether domestic partners could access the same the BU health insurance the same as a spouse.

## **SURVEY**

In a brief discussion of the survey, support for professional development events was highlighted as the most supported GSO event, followed by pub nights. Co-sponsored events followed, breaking even on the survey’s desirability scale. Big parties fared poorly in the survey, as did the ‘other’ category.

## **5. Winter Reception and Pub Nights**

### **End of Winter Reception**

The winter reception will be held March 8, 2012. The room is booked and the event will be located in the GSU. Past funding for this event has been around \$5,000. It was reported that last year’s event—attended by 130-140 people—cost +/- \$4,700.

The \$5,000 budget line originated from ‘Cooperative’ monies the administration provided in the past that had to be spent on just such an event. That ‘earmark’ no longer applies. GSO is free to spend all funds received for the Fiscal Year for any agreed purpose broadly benefiting GRS.

Discussion included feedback from the survey in which “Big Parties” rated poorly on

the desirability scale. Questions were posed about re-purposing these monies for other events and uses.

Developing programming and committing budget to professional development was discussed, on the strength of the interest in this area expressed in the recent survey.

The decision was taken to, at this juncture, proceed with the End of Winter Reception for next month and entertain the full range of options—particularly professional development—when considering GSO priorities and spending for academic year 2012-2013.

A vote to commit \$5,000 to the reception did not pass. A subsequent **vote to commit \$4,500 to the End of Winter Reception passed.**

### **Pub Nights**

Pub nights were described to new attendees. This year GSO has committed \$800 to each Pub Night for the purchase of \$5 drink tickets and a couple large plates of Nachos. The drink tickets are then sold for \$1 each to attendees. The money collected is given to the bartenders at the BU Pub as tips. This practice is appreciated by the pub staff who are not always tipped when others hold these type of events.

**A Pub Night for the month of February was approved at \$800.** There will not be a Pub Night in March because of the End of Winter Reception will be held that month.

Subsequently, the **February Pub Night** was scheduled for **Friday, February 24.**