

Boston University Graduate Student Organization

Minutes

Tuesday, September 11, 2012

5:30PM

1. Introductions, Background, Announcements and Treasurer's Report

INTRODUCTIONS

Leslie opened the meeting by welcoming attendees. The GSO officers introduced themselves. Ren's role as professional development chair was highlighted. Jonathan (Health Insurance subcommittee) and Damian (Travel Grants) were introduced in absentia.

Leslie announced the GSO email address as a means of contact the GSO (gso@bu.edu). She also volunteered her own email address (llemire@bu.edu)

BACKGROUND

A brief overview of the GSO and its activities was provided for folks unfamiliar with the organization. These include: pub nights, co-sponsored events, consultations and advocacy with the GRS Dean's office, and professional development (new). The health insurance survey was also cited as an example of a GSO activity.

Eliza and Carol described the budget for the organization. The GSO had a \$15,000 budget for its academic year activities and \$5,000 that it makes available to applicants for travel grants. The GSO-meeting attendance requirement for department members to be eligible for these travel grants was also detailed.

Voting rules were briefly outlined. A three-quarters majority is necessary to pass an item that involves money. Simple majorities suffice for other matters.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The GSO's meetings for this semester will be held on Wednesday, October 3, Tuesday, October 30, and Wednesday, November 14. There will also be a meeting the first week of December. That date will follow based on feedback.

Carol has put last year's GSO Survey on the GSO website. It is a lengthy report. There is a table of contents on the first page that can help in pinpointing the location of specific data.

There is a new provost of graduate affairs.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Since it is the beginning of the semester, the GSO account balance has reset to \$15,000. The pizza purchased for this meeting is the first expense of the year.

Carol helpfully provided a breakdown of the main categories of expenditure from last year.

- 7% GSO meetings
- 75% social events (e.g., pub nights, winter event)
- 10% co-sponsored events
- 8% other

Carol noted that the survey results were largely negative toward the largest cost item from “social events” – the large Goodbye to Winter event. The survey also indicated support for co-sponsored events and a clear desire for more professional development events. She stated that monies for the new professional development events could reasonably be drawn from funds spent last year on either “other” or “social events.”

2. Pub Nights

Basil introduced the GSO monthly pub nights to attendees. These events are a core element of GSO's social events. At meetings, GSO representatives authorize both the date and the amount of money available for the GSO pub nights.

In the past these events have been based on the GSO's purchase of 150 drinks tickets and two orders of nachos. Given the BU Pub's pricing the maximum expenditure for a pub night provisioned along these lines is \$843.50.

A question was raised as to how many people attend pub nights. A general estimate was put forward of 110-130 persons. Ren pointed out that 68% of survey respondents rated small parties as “important”—pub nights are basically the only event in this category. Carol also noted that 130 of the 300 respondents said they had attended, a high proportion.

Department reps were reminded that they should specifically inform/remind their departments of upcoming pub nights if they feel their departments are not adequately informed about these events.

Pub night notices are on the website. They are announced through the GSO's Facebook account too. Pub night dates are also included in a general email to all GRS.

To get the semester started, Basil proposed two pub nights for **September 28** and

October 26. He requested \$843.50 for each pub night—a total of \$1687. A vote was taken. The vote passed.

3. NAGPS

The NAGPS is the **National Association of Graduate-Professional Students**. The GSO enrolled BU as members two years ago. Last year, 2011-2012, the GSO chose not to renew the membership. The NAGPS recently re-approached BU's GSO concerning membership. The cost is \$500 per year.

The NAGPS holds an annual conference each year. This year the conference is at Duke. They also have held legislative action days to lobby lawmakers (perhaps an annual activity, probably not more frequently). They also offer the opportunity to students to buy into a healthcare plan if the school they attend is a NAGPS member.

The question was asked: was NAGPS membership beneficial in the past?

The answer put forward was that it is hard to measure tangible benefits GSO derived from membership. The GSO did send a representative to a NAGPS meeting at MIT two years ago (MIT was very active in NAGPS at its start).

It was also stated that being in the association and getting benefits from membership probably requires sending someone to NAGPS meetings. Travel and costs to represent BU's GSO at meetings and conferences would necessitate costs from the GSO budget beyond the \$500 membership fee.

Prospectively, the issue of participating in NAGPS health insurance was raised. It is cheap, at +/- \$90/month. The quality and comprehensiveness of the NAGPS health insurance was unknown. Attendees interested in learning more about the NAGPS health insurance were encouraged to visit the association's website. It was also queried, importantly, whether buying into this health insurance scheme would satisfy the state regulatory requirements for MA. Those interested were urged to follow-up.

Two additional questions were raised. The first was primarily rhetorical: Would the GSO send someone to these meetings? This was not directly addressed in discussion, seemingly due to consensus that the GSO was hesitant to underwrite the costs of airfare and accommodation for attendance.

The second question was: Does it make sense to join if we are not going to attend meetings?

The issue was tabled for discussion at the following meeting. Attendees were

encouraged to review the information on the NAGPS's website to form opinion on the issue in advance of discussion at the next GSO meeting.

4. Professional Development

Ren added to the introduction of professional development events provided earlier in the meeting. She also mentioned discussions she has had with a professor in astronomy who is part of a cohort of four young professors who could do an event about getting on the job market.

Leslie noted that a number of suggestions forwarded to the GSO have also been in the area of personal finance: financial advice for graduate students, saving money while in graduate school, doing taxes, etc.

Carol responded that there are some links on the GSO website about finances and that interest in this area was supported in last year's GSO survey. She also cautioned that she had heard that the person G-WISE invited to hold a workshop in this area sometime in the last 1-2 years was considered subpar and should not be approached.

Job fairs, job-hunting workshops, and networking events were also mentioned.

Events focused on the construction of CV/Resume/Coverletter, how to negotiate a starting packaging, publishing tips, and networking events with alumni were also remarked. One submission offered that CV/Resume workshops could be coupled with in-depth attention to how to construct teaching statements and research statements.

A session of effective teaching was also suggested. There was some discussion that these events may have some disciplinary distinctions. For example, science and engineering students may be aided by emphasis on poster presentations, something more relevant to their fields than it is to students in the humanities.

Carol also suggested sessions where students from across GRS—with participants from several different departments—presented their research. Cost would be minimal: a room and cookies. It would provide practice for folks in giving talks to people who are not in your subject area well as practice moderating.

Further suggestions were encouraged. Please email Ren, Leslie, or the GSO email.

5. Additional Business

Carol raised the issue of BU health insurance. She highlighted that this year there is a new dental option—not just the BU Dental School Plan. She encouraged students interested in dental coverage to look into it.