Boston University
Graduate Student Organization

Minutes
Wednesday, October 3, 2012
5:30PM

1. Treasurer’s Report

TREASURER’S REPORT
Carol reported that the GSO’s current account balance is $13,213.73.

This balance reflects the funds spent for pizza for September’s meeting and the monies GSO voted last month to dedicate to the September and October pub nights.

2. Pub Nights

Basil reported that first pub night of the year was a success. The 150 drink tickets purchased sold out and all the food GSO provided was consumed.

Friday, October 26, is the next Pub Night.

3. NAGPS Membership

The issue of NAGPS—the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students—membership tabled at the September meeting was re-opened for discussion.

It was reiterated that NAGPS activities are a National Lobbying Day, an annual conference, Graduate and Professional Student Appreciation Week, and a health insurance buy-in offer. The cost of annual membership is $500.

From the prior meeting, the issue of the likelihood/possibility of participation was raised. It was stated that, when BU was a member in 2010, the regional meetings were held at MIT. But not, the Northeast Office is in Buffalo—making involvement at the even the regional level an expensive and time-consuming travel commitment.

The NAGPS health insurance was again mentioned. It is cheaper than BU’s health insurance. However, it is unclear whether it meets the minimum requirements for
Massachusetts. Further analysis and opinion on this front was not brought forward.

The opinion that some GSO representative do not see a benefit to past/future NAGP membership was put forward.

Another opinion was that some of the interests of NAGPS might be difficult to frame as of issue to all of GRS. This comment referred to the association’s lobbying around NIH and NSF grant funding, which has less relevance to some departments in GRS. Other students affirmed that this funding was critical to their departments and worth supporting, if the lobbying effort was, indeed, effective.

It was also stated that NAGPS seemed “detached” and difficult to reach/influence. Some expressed skepticism that once-off lobbying days were effective.

A motion was put forward not to join NAGPS this year. The motion was seconded. The vote passed.

4. Professional Development & Co-Sponsored Events

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Ren was out of town and not able to attend the meeting.

Carol suggested that scheduling professional development events might be aided if each department representative submitted the set times of department seminars in their respective departments. This could be collated and used to try to future schedule professional events at the most advantageous times possible.

CO-SPONSORED EVENTS
Leslie reported that the GSO has received an inquiry about a co-sponsored event application.

She reiterated that GSO encourages co-sponsored event applications and underscored that co-sponsored events were seen positively by respondents in last year’s GSO survey.

5. BGLO – Boston Graduate Leadership Organization

Eliza reported back to the GSO following her attendance at BGLO’s first meeting of the semester in September.
In addition to her participation, the current the Chair and Vice-Chair are both from Tufts School of Nutrition. A representative from Boston College’s schools of business and law also attended. Several representatives from MIT were present.

Previously BGLO events at Tequila Rain had high attendance, perhaps 900 persons. An event of this type will be organized for the spring semester.

This fall, BGLO intends to hold a volunteer day and has proposed several possibilities that Eliza sought GSO feedback on:
- Canned food drive with the Greater Boston Food Bank
- 5K run for charity—two are scheduled at the end of October/early November.
- Inter-school service competition
- Thanksgiving Project of some type
- *Cradles to Crayons:* organization that has a warehouse contains holds school supplies for children. Underprivileged students in need of school supplies can receive school supplies from this warehouse through orders placed by their school counselors.
- Esplanade Association’s river clean up (although this is probably better-suited for spring)

*Boston Cares* was also raised as a possibility.

A suggestion was voiced that more spontaneous possibilities in the vein of a flash mob-type activity. The inventiveness of this suggestion was appreciated. The complexity and consensus for this at the BGLO level was raised. It might be more effectively organized at the individual institution level. Those were interested in this area of activity were encouraged to consult together and the GSO would welcome future ideas along these lines.

Question of what would the students be doing for the 5K was raised. Would they be running for charity after having received sponsorship pledges? Would they be volunteering as part of the support staff for the 5K?

Although not slated until spring, the financial outlay from BU’s GSO expected for a Tequila Rain event was queried. What was it in the past? Some longer serving reps recalled that GSO previously put up $200 toward drink tickets for drink minimum, an outlay which may have been recouped by the end of the night. Carol stated that she will look up past financial report to answer this question more specifically.

It was queried whether “Cradles to Crayons” was once-off or multi-day activity (e.g., inviting folks to participate in one of a series of dates over a specific period). It was stated that it was being considered as a once-off activity.

The next BGLO meeting is October 30. Interested persons are encourage to talk to
Eliza in advance of the next meeting or email further queries and suggestion through the GSO email.

### 6. TRAVEL GRANT COMMITTEE

**NEW CHAIR**
Damien, the current Travel Grant Chair, announced that he will be stepping down for the remainder of the semester.

This semester’s Travel Grant application deadline is December 2.

The activities of the travel grant committee were sketched for the benefit of meeting attendees. Every semester the GSO awards 5 travel grants of $500 dollars each for members of GRS to attend professional meetings where they will give papers. There are usually +/- 30 applications per semester. The priority is generally given to people with mature research who have exhausted other funding options.

The travel grant chair organizes a diverse committee of at least 4 persons to discuss the judging requirements, read all applications, choose their top 8 applications, and deliberate together to ultimately select the 5 winners (unranked) and 3 alternates (ranked).

People who serve on the committee or chair the travel grant process are not eligible to apply.

It was emphasized that this is an important way for the GSO to support the academic progression of GRS students. Damien also emphasized that it is also a good way to learn how to write a good grant application.

Evan Judd volunteered to assume the position of Chair of the Travel Grant Committee. This was moved and seconded. The vote passed.

**REPEAT ELIGIBILITY**
Leslie remarked that she received a query from a past winner, asking whether she can again apply for consideration for a travel grant award.

Damien reported that there is currently no criteria that limits the number of times a student may win the award, nor any direction that judges should consider multiple applications from an individual on anything other than the immediate, specific merit of the application.

The question was asked: why was this person awarded before? The answer was
that her application was well-written. And, of course, every semester there is a different level of competition, based on the standard of the applications received.

It was stated that the perceived significance of participation in the meeting for professional development is also taken into account. Also, though “mature research” is encouraged, there is no prohibition that keeps a first-year from applying for the award.

A statement was made that more people need to be on the committee so the significance of the work can be better judged. This was not contested and wide participation in the travel grants committee was urged. However, it was also stated that committee members are not making down-in-the-weeds judgments of the significance of research from across the fields. Rather, they are evaluating how convincingly the applicant has argued for the significance of his/her work and the importance of attendance at the meeting in their application.

A suggestion was put forward that the Travel Grant Committee should give preference to students who have not been awarded previously. Further discussion of this item followed.

Discussion included whether or not this would pertain to the partial awardees that received smaller grants because the GSO had extra money remaining at the end of last year that was provided to alternates. On this point, it was generally agreed that partial awardees should be fully considered for future applications.

Discussion also included a suggestion that the guidelines for the travel grants be revisited. There was a general willingness to revisit and revise if there is a critical mass of interest. Amendments could be solicited and presented to the GSO for a vote at a subsequent meeting.

The general position under discussion was that, among equal applications, preference should be given to applications from students that have not been awarded a GSO travel grant in the past.

Based on the discussion, a specific motion was made to affirm the above suggestion with language to this effect:

“Preference will be given to persons who have not previously received this award”

This vote passed.

The next meeting is October 30.