

Boston University Graduate Student Organization

Minutes

Tuesday, September 10, 2013
5:30PM – CAS 200

1. Announcements

Leila Haery, GSO President, opened the first GSO meeting of the 2013-2014 academic year by welcoming departmental representatives and introducing the GSO's current officers.

2. Guest Presentation – Big Brothers, Big Sisters

Prior to discussion of GSO business, **David Hession**, of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay (BBBSMB), made a recruitment presentation. BBBSMB are seeking mentors for one-to-one mentoring for boys (ages 7-12) and girls (ages 7-15).

The children BBBSMB works with come from a range of communities in the city and have all indicated that they want to receive mentoring from an adult. BBBSMB match specialists work with children and mentors to make the best possible match. The organization provide training for volunteer mentors.

BBBSMB have two primary programs students can get involved in:

- **School-based mentoring:** Entails a once a week visit with a child. Mentors visit children in their schools during the school day (for example, sharing lunch). Since this program mirrors the school year, *graduate students unable to make a summer commitment can get involved in this program.*
- **Community-base mentoring:** Entails a twice a month commitment to get together with a child, normally outside of the school setting. This could include playing sports or other games, going to the movies, and seasonal activities. *Involvement in this program requires a commitment of at least one-year.*

Interested persons can contact David Hession (dhession@bbsmb.org, 617.956.0251). Expressions of interest can also be routed through the GSO (gso@bu.edu). Contact information for BBBSMB will also be posted to the GSO's Facebook page.

3. Treasurer's Report

Nolan Little, GSO Treasurer, reported that the organization closed the last academic year with **\$28.22** remaining in the general budget and **\$499.00** in the travel grants budget.

GSO begins this academic year with an operating budget of **\$15,000** received from Dean Jeffrey Hughes's office. Of these monies, \$5,000 is dedicated for travel grants and \$10,000 for general activities.

4. Library Petition

In carryover business from 2012-2013, Leila announced that Mugar Library has changed their borrowing policy for graduate students from 4 weeks to 133 days.

This is a return to the library's long-standing policy after a change in the middle of last year to harmonize borrowing across more of BU's campuses and libraries and between undergraduate and graduate students.

The GSO submitted a petition with more than 500 signatures and met with Linda Plunkett, Associate Library for Graduate and Research Services. The organization's petitions and representations were an important factor in this reversal, which will aid graduate student engaged in long-term research and preparing for oral examinations.

5. Open Access

Another item of carryover business was an Open Access update. Last spring (April meeting) Steven Bhardwaj approached the GSO for support in pushing the university in this direction.

Leila reported that Steven has been working with a member of the BU University Council on this front. The University Council is expected to vote on October 2, 2013 to make BU student work more Open Access friendly.

Persons interested in more information can contact Steven Bardwash or the GSO (gso@bu.edu).

6. GSO Social Chair

In new business, **Kasey Aderhold**, GSO Social Chair, proposed the first pub night of the year for **Friday, September 27**. A vote was taken and passed. The GSO

approved up to \$900 for this event.

One of the mixer approaches to pub night involving the use of playing cards and possibility of free drinks will be used again. The use of identification stickers for pub patrons was also raised

Casey also asked for suggestions of other events.

- The example of the **coffee events** held last May at (then) Espresso Royale Café (now Pavement) were discussed.
 - At the end of last year, GSO spent its remaining funds on a series of informal morning get-togethers in which the GSO provided attendees with vouchers for purchases.
 - With respect to Pavement, the coffee shop's new internet policy (2 free hours every 24 hours) was raised. It was also mentioned that the location will likely be crowded while undergraduates are in town (the May events followed their departure).
- A suggestion was made to have a **costume event** nearer to Halloween (coffee event, pub night, etc.).
- Casey mentioned that she will look into **graduate student tickets to BU Hockey in January**. In past years graduate students were offered free tickets to games scheduled when undergraduates were off campus. This did not happen last season.

7. GSO Seminar Series

Leila described the seminar events GSO held last year. These involved a series of TED-style talks on active research by students from different disciplines.

Evan Judd volunteered to assume the organization of these events for this academic year. **Kasey Aderhold** indicated that she will support Evan in this effort.

Persons interested in helping with seminar organization or giving talks at future seminars should contact the GSO (gso@bu.edu).

8. Parental Leave Policy

The issue of BU's parental leave policy was raised by a representative from the Physics department. Currently, BU has no specific policy.

In the past, the GSO worked with Women in Biology and Women in Physics to press the university for action on this front.

A number of other schools have policies. Although no longer current, a previous comparison of parental leave policies from different universities can be found on the GSO website: http://people.bu.edu/gso/Parental_Leave-Comparison.pdf

Also, Dean Whitaker previously provided a statement on the subject http://people.bu.edu/gso/Parental_Leave-1.pdf.

Concern was expressed that the birth of a child may cause parents to have to drop classes, may lose funding and salary related departmental work (for example, teaching), and may lose health insurance if they have to withdrawal from the university for a semester. This may also trigger the repayment of student loans. This issue disproportionately impacts female students.

The university is, apparently, working on a policy that is currently in draft form. Therefore, GSO input would be timely.

Representatives more familiar with these activities reported that, the current policy is 60 days of disability leave. It was stated that this duration is because that the leave that can be executed on grant funding from agencies like the NIH.

Funding appears to be the leading institutional concern, with the university and departments amenable to policy that does not incur additional costs, but hesitant to enshrine a policy that may involve additional expense.

In addition, the presence of Post-Docs complicates the picture. At one point, the administration held that the policy for graduate students could not be more favorable than the one in place for Post-Docs.

Two questions emerged. First, how many graduate students does this effect? The second question was voiced in the context of the university's new system of student funding. The new system of 5-yr guarantee should make this issue easier to address institutionally. However, if that is true, what would apply to current students not party to that funding promise?

In terms of actions, the GSO will seek the current draft policy for circulation and comment. Department Reps are asked to do three things:

- (1) check with their departments about availability of lactation rooms,
- (2) solicit issues experienced in in their departments
- (3) gather suggestions for policy-making on this front.

Questions or report-backs can be sent to the GSO email address (gso@bu.edu).

9. Travel Grants

The issue of GSO travel grants for conference attendance was raised. Evan explained that GSO received a larger than normal number of applicants last fall (55-60). Last spring numbers returned to previous ranges (+/-20).

In the spring, GSO offered more travel grants (usually the number is 5).

A request from a History Rep was made to dedicate more money to travel grants, particularly since GSO had a large amount of money remaining last May that needed to be spent by the end of the Spring Semester. While that request suggested the GSO issue a greater number of travel grants, an Art History Rep requested consideration of larger travel grant amounts, citing the cost of attendance for students whose discipline hold major conferences outside the United States.

In terms of proceeding, a two-step process previously discussed was again articulated. First, GSO should approach the Dean to request more travel grant funds. Second, if unsuccessful, GSO should proceed with voting on whether to add additional funds to increase the number or dollar amount of its travel grants.

The possibility of GSO issuing travel Grants for research (as opposed to conference presentations) was also raised.

Leila asked for department reps to send information to the GSO email (gso@bu.edu) that would help support a GSO justification for requesting for money from the Dean for research grants.

10. Election of GSO VP

The last order of business was the selection of a replacement of GSO Vice President **Eliza Wallace**, a long-serving member of the GSO leadership team. Eliza will soon graduate. Eliza's replacement will serve until the next GSO elections in December.

Eliza described the VP's duties as:

- Attending GSO meetings
- Chairing GSO meetings in the absence of the President
- Attending meetings with university leadership alongside the GSO President
- Aiding the organization on an as-needed basis and as requested by GSO President
- Ordering and bringing pizza and soda to GSO meetings.

BGLO representation was mentioned. Eliza responded that her participation in BGLO meetings was an elective and not a prescribed duty of the VP. She also

mentioned that BGLO is may go dormant. Most of the original leadership from the other universities in the city is/has graduated. It is unclear whether another generation of leadership will prioritize this cross-city graduate community engagement. Eliza pressed that if anyone from BU is interested to take up this initiative and and animate it she would help make introductions, offer a few suggestions, and provide the backstory for the collaboration.

Initially, no floor nominations for VP were received. Evan Judd then volunteered to assume the VP duties for the GSO. A vote was held and passed. **Evan Judd** will serve as GSO VP until the next election in December.