

Boston University Graduate Student Organization

Minutes

Wednesday, October 2, 2013

5:30PM – CAS 200

1. Announcements

Leila Haery, GSO President, opened the meeting by introducing herself, Evan Judd—the new GSO VP, replacing Eliza Wallace—and GSO Treasurer Nolan Little.

2. Treasurer's Report

Nolan Little, GSO Treasurer, reported that GSO spent **\$897.47** on the September Pub Night. The organization's operating funds of the remainder of the academic year is **\$14,006.33**.

3. GSO Social Chair

Kasey Aderholt, GSO Social Chair, reported that last Friday's pub event went well.

Kasey promoted the event as a "GSO Social" at the BU Pub, rather than a "Pub Night" because of a shift in the provision of drink tickets at the event. This has been undertaken to encourage wider socializing among attendees. Instead of providing deeply discounted drink tickets for purchase, attendees receive a playing card. When attendees introduce themselves to the person holding the matching card, they both receive free drink tickets.

Kasey reported that the available drink tickets were exhausted within 90 minutes. It was also noted that long lines at the bar provided further time for card holding pairs to get to know one another while waiting to obtain their drink.

Unfortunately the BU Pub does not have an available date in October for a GSO Social this month. Kasey envisioned a costume event the weekend of Halloween, but apparently the pub is not taking group bookings during that period because it is the same weekend as the annual alumni celebration.

7. GSO Seminar Series

Evan Judd, GSO Vice-President and coordinator for the Travel Grant Committee and the GSO Seminar Series, reported that the first GSO Seminar of the year will be held on **Monday, October 28**. The time of the event will either be 5-6PM or 6-7PM. Three talks from GRS graduate students are envisioned, followed by Q&A, and light snacks. The event will be held in the Life Sciences & Engineering Building (LSEB) located at 24 Cummington.

A call for abstracts from interested presenters will go out shortly. In addition to any received abstracts, Evan & Casey may approach applicants from last year as well as recent travel grant winners.

Evan and Kasey requested \$100 for refreshments. Vote taken and passed.

8. Parental Leave Policy

The GSO Rep from the Physics department, Adam Iaizzi, reported on activity on the parental leave front since the September GSO meeting. He has communicated with Associate Provost Tim Barbari, who responded that the draft policy is being amended following input from GWISE. Barbari indicated that he will share it with the GSO for comment (seemingly) alongside sharing it with the University Council.

The policy will apply only to doctoral students. This may be sensible/necessary, given the shorter duration of master's studies, the existing policy that provides for a simple leave of absence, and, crucial, the fact that GRS does not frequently fund master's students.

GSO Reps—previously encouraged to canvas and report back with parental leave examples from within their departments—are additionally encouraged to bring forward examples from masters students within their departments.

In addition, GSO stated that the organization would like give input *before* it goes before the University Council. The Physics Rep will ask Barbari if he can share the current draft. He will also contact GWISE to see if we can obtain the version they commented on and become familiar with the feedback they have already provided.

Moreover, it would also help shape GSO input to check whether other Universities with parental leave policies for graduate students also cover master's students—and what those policies entail.

In a related item, Leila reported that she, Evan, and Nolan briefly discussed lactation rooms with Dean Hughes at a recent meeting.

9. Travel Grants

Evan Judd, GSO Travel Grants Committee Chair, reported that this issue of travel grants was raised in the recent meeting between GSO and Dean Hughes. In particular, the desire for short-term research travel funding that could be used domestically was brought forward.

Dean Hughes reported that he currently does not have additional funds to back this idea or add to conference travel. He suggested GSO use its operational funding to conduct a trial effort to gauge demand from GRS students for small research support grants.

After a lengthy conversation, the following items were agreed related to the December Travel Grant application process (for travel between Jan 1 and June 30, 2014):

- **GSO will continue, as per usual, to offer 5 travel grants for conferences** (this is done with monies from the Dean dedicated solely to this purpose).
- **GSO voted and passed the commitment of \$1000 to award two travel grants of up to \$500 for research in December** (this represents 7% of the organization's operating budget for the academic year).
- Based on response, GSO will make a determination for the spring application period during the second semester.
- The same rules will apply to both applications. The same deadline will be used. The same committee will review these applications. As with conferences, applications can be for foreign or domestic use.
- The definition of research and/or research-relevant workshops/training will remain broad and inclusive. It is up to applicants to make convincing arguments about the relevance and importance.
- The application will state that an anonymous version of submitted application may be used for advocacy between GSO and GRS administration.
- Awardees will, when submitting their receipts for reimbursement, be requested to supply a brief description of how the grant from the GSO furthered their research. This may be used for advocacy for further funding.

Department Reps are asked to communicate this to their departments and encourage applications. The case for GRS funding dedicated to this will be stronger if GSO can demonstrate demand.

Another route to demonstrating demand might be to demonstrate the scarcity of other options for obtaining this type of funding from GRS departments. The impression is that this varies widely. But the true topography of these possibilities is not well described.

Further, to this point: **GSO representatives are asked to do some basic research on this front within their departments and submit their findings to gso@bu.edu in advance of the November meeting.** Departmental administrator(s) may be the key informants on this topic.

Questions for GSO Reps to Report Back On	
Does the department make conference funding available to graduate students?	Does the department make short-term research funding available that (unlike, say, the GRAF) can be used for domestic research?
How many awards are dispersed per year?	How many awards are dispersed per year?
How many applications are received? <i>(try to get more than 1 year of data)</i>	How many applications are received? <i>(try to get more than 1 year of data)</i>

All information gleaned on this front will be useful. Finding that no reliable data is available from the department is useful. Finding that the process is contorted and/or ad hoc is also useful information for GSO advocacy.

10. Faculty Committees

Leila raised the issue of graduate student participation on the GRS Academic Committees (e.g., Graduate Affairs Committee, Academic Policy Committee, etc.) and the GSO assuming a role in the selection of student representatives.

In September, the Dean’s office solicited applications from interested students and made the selections for this semester. The Dean recently asked if the GSO would like to review the applications and select the graduate student representatives for the spring semester (and, ostensibly, beyond).

A vote was taken and passed that GSO will assume this responsibility for spring semester.

It was also stated that the GSO has a clear interest in hearing reports from the graduate students representatives to these committees. This is not currently the case. Adding these reports to GSO business would keep the organization apprised of committee developments and provide an opportunity for graduate student committee representatives to access a broader base for their representative role.

While this may not pertain all academic committees, it certainly is applicable to the Graduate Affairs Committee and Academic Policy Committee, to name two. GSO leadership will work to incorporate this reporting into scheduled GSO meetings.