

Boston University Graduate Student Organization

Minutes

Tuesday, September 9, 2014
5:30 – 6:30 CAS 200

1. Announcements

Evan Judd, GSO President and Travel Grants Committee Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming attending new and returning GSO representatives. Encouraged new members to sign-in to ensure their department is represented.

Evan introduced the officers: Vice President and Social Chair, **Kasey Aderhold**; Treasurer, **Adam Iaizzi**; Co-Sponsored Events Chair, **Leila Haery**; and Secretary, **Kristen Edwards**.

There will be a workshop hosted by Bridgewater State University on **Friday, October 3rd** entitled, “Teaching at Teaching-Intensive Institutions”. All interested parties are encouraged to attend and notify their department about the event.

2. Treasurer’s Report

The organization’s operating fund for the remainder of the academic year is **\$14,000**. This includes **\$1,000** set aside for two travel grants for the summer/fall. In addition, there is a separate budget of **\$5,000** set aside solely for travel grants for the year.

3. Vika Zafrin, Discussion of Open Access Policy at BU

Agenda item tabled as speaker was not present.

4. Matthew Danish, Construction on Commonwealth Avenue

Matthew Danish, a Boston University student, requests the GSO support the organizations, such as Walk Boston, in order to more effectively renovate Commonwealth Avenue for pedestrians and bicyclists in the upcoming construction project.

In March 2012, a public meeting was held announcing the project. Design planning was promised, but never shown to the public. In December 2013, notices were hung by the city on trees along Commonwealth notifying the public of their removal for the upcoming construction. A few people called and complained to the city that there had been no specific design plan or notification for the removal of these trees, and they would not be allowed to remove them.

The new design would require a year-long project, funded partially by Boston University and the city totaling between 10 and 12 million dollars. The construction would take place between Amory Street by the BU Bridge to Alcorn Street near Packard's Corner. The intent is to spruce up the street, fix intersections, create better left turn lanes, and better accessibility into the MBTA stations, but no plans were made to increase the safety of pedestrian walkways or safer bicycle paths. The group, Walk Boston, is pressuring the city to do a better job with the design. Since the design has essentially been finalized, the city is refusing to alter the design, potentially because they don't want to spend more money on the project.

Matthew would like more student voices to be heard, and he is requesting support across the student body.

Questions

- What are the specifics of the design is the public proposing?
 - Engineers and transportation specialists worked to create a raised cycle track on the right side of the street, separated by the sidewalk and parked cars. In addition, bicycle signals and viewing accessibility for cars to see the cyclists would be added. It would allow children, seniors, and less experienced cyclists to feel comfortable using the bicycle paths along Commonwealth.
- Are we approaching the BUPD or the transportation department? Do they understand it's a matter of efficiency and safety? Is it possible to gain the favor of the administration?
 - The BUPD has claimed to be interested in the matter, but they listen to their administration. Upper levels in the administration have their own ideas, but they may be opening to hearing the ideas of the students as well.
- Could we send individual emails to the BUPD and BU Transportation Department?
 - Sure. As many student voices get heard, the better.
- What should the GSO do?
 - The city is proposing to do as little as possible, but there is room for these upgrades. Students—graduate and undergraduate—could send letters and/or petitions. The GSO representatives believe we should figure out to whom we should be writing.
- The Boston Transportation Department should host a public meeting. Is this possible?
 - They were asked to host one, but they refused. It was suggested that a BU-focused public meeting should be held.

Evan suggested that before the next meeting, we organize a platform. What do we want to accomplish first? Afterward, we can make this an official GSO policy and put pressure on the administration or work together with them to alter the design plans. All parties interested in helping Matthew work on this project, please e-mail him at md@bu.edu

5. Adjunct Faculty Unionization

Sam, an American New England Studies major at BU, requested support for the BU adjunct faculty. The SEIU (Service Employees International Union) is working with the adjunct faculty

at BU to unionize them. Joining a union would guarantee job security, better pay, less class hours, and more of a voice in the university and among the faculty.

There is a campaign supporting this decision and an online petition. GSO representatives and their departments are encouraged to go to buadjuncts.org to sign the petition.

6. Parental Accommodation Update

Adam updated the attending representatives about the status of the Parental Accommodation Policy. The University successfully passed the Policy for Ph.D. students in good academic standing, with funding for service/non-service awards for sixty days, applicable to both men and women, as well as for birth and adoption. Those who take the time offered by the accommodation will be able to keep their health insurance if provided through the university, as well as legally remain a student.

A representative asked if having this type of policy was common at other universities. Adam thinks BU is ahead of other universities, but is aware of some similar policies in the Boston area.

For additional information, refer to the GSO website.

7. Social Chair Appointment

Kasey requested a replacement for her position as Social Chair. Responsibilities include organizing events, such as the Pub nights, coffee hours, or any similar events. Planning these takes minimal effort and time—typically an hour of planning per event, with time spent attending each event.

A new representative asked about the number of pub nights, requesting less money is used for social events and more money be used to fund departments with less funding. The travel grants are a separate budget, whereas the research travel grants are not. It was brought to the attending representatives' attention that there was about \$2,500 left in the budget last year since we had minimal co-sponsored events, and the GSO did set aside money for all of the alternates of travel grants prior to using the rest of the money on end-of-the-year social events. It was also mentioned the social events are put to a vote on a case-by-case basis every meeting in case representatives believe there are alternative ways to be spending that money.

Alex Yen from the art history department volunteered for the position as Social Chair. Evan motioned to elect Alex as Social Chair; Kristen seconded the motion. Motion passed.

8. Last Minute Items

A representative asked how the travel grants worked, and if they were on a rolling basis. Evan explained that if your department is currently represented in the GSO, they are eligible for

funding between January 1st and June 30th, 2015. He also encouraged graduate students to apply, even if they aren't sure they will be presenting yet. As long as the student is planning on attending the conference, they may apply.

Kasey suggested that there be a pub night before the next meeting. Pub nights reach a lot of graduate students. GSO is not heard of that much outside of travel grants, so making our group visible is important. Kasey motioned for \$1,000 from the current budget for a pub night in October. Evan seconded the motion. The motion passed.