

GSA Council minutes, November 12th, 2006

Meeting called to order at 7:15 pm. Quorum.

I. Agenda and Minutes - approved unanimously

II. New business:

A: Recognition of new groups

1. LGBTQ PanSexualia

No representative was present, recognition will be postponed.

2. Neuroscience

No representative was present, recognition will be postponed.

3. Material Science Research

JD Sorge: We would like to start a chapter of this national organization. This will be broader than existing departmental GSA, incorporating people from Physics, Chemistry, and other departments.

Question: is this a new group?

JS yes.

Ryan Fowler: For funding purposes, this would be a subgroup of MSGSA (the existing departmental group): it is not a departmental group so it will be voted on at the next meeting.

B. Approval of 06-07 budget

From the floor: there are not enough copies.

Carlos D: We have more money overall, and the percentage of internal allocations has gone down, so the total amount allocated externally is higher.

Q: What is the surplus? How does it compare to the past?

CD: The surplus is money allocated but not spent and other similar items.

RF: this is less than it was, it was about \$4,000 last year.

Approved with 5 abstentions.

C. TA/GA contract negotiations

CD: Our contract will expire in July, negotiations will begin around February.

This is a good time to discuss what we want with a new contract

Scott Bruton: Last semester the AAUP/AFT sent an electronic survey to find out people's concerns; along with information gathered from meetings, individual discussions, we have synthesized an idea of what the union can do in contract negotiations. The biggest concern people have voiced (unsurprisingly) is money.

Workload has been the next biggest issue; this has been more a question of some control than reducing the amount of work required *per se*. Family benefits also came up. From this we assembled a bargaining survey to focus in on people's actual concerns. This will be a big activity for us, and we would also like to meet with people, come to meetings, to discuss these issues. Also we would be happy to give you extra copies so that we can hear from more people. I'll spend a few minutes to go through this. Please fill out the form while I talk. First paragraph already covered. Contract expires 6/30, it would be best to try to have a new contract before then. We plan to request negotiations in mid-December, ask to start around beginning of spring semester. That gives 6 months for negotiations, but the administration is very good at stalling. This survey is anonymous and will not be passed on to anyone.

Separate questions on department, because many people teach in a different department from where they study.

Some background; a few years ago AAUP filed a grievance on behalf of expository writing TAs over the practice of teaching two sections one semester, one the next. Parts of the grievance were dismissed on a technicality but in the end we managed to get the workload reduced to 2 courses a year.

We also want to know whether you feel that your assistantship is related to your dissertation research, we need to some extent to disentangle this in order to assess how much of a problem workload is.

Q; Is there a differentiation between TA and GA?

SB: yes, that's part of this question.

Try to estimate your average work per week for workload, since that is what is covered in the contract.

Next indicate your priorities relating to workload. This includes reduction of overall limit, clearing up language which has made the contract difficult to enforce, clarification of duties (e.g. GA-ship should not include non-research tasks), enforcement (filing grievances etc; eg Biology often requires 25 hours as a routine matter but there is a contract loophole); other, if there is something I haven't thought of.

Rank priorities - pay, workload issues, improved family leave benefits (many grad students have spouses and children; you may not know that the family and medical leave act, NJ family leave act, give time off for pregnancy and shortly after etc., also paternity leave, elder care), subsidized childcare (RU-affiliated childcare costs about \$800/month, which is below-market but still expensive), better teacher-training

Rafael Greenblatt: Healthcare is also an issue. There is a danger that we might end up having to pay a considerable amount for healthcare. There are complications, but it is something negotiations can affect.

Scott B: right. One thing being discussed in Trenton would pass on a cost of about \$1200/yr to each of us.

Last item is about achievements. This is a bit of fluff, but we do want to know what people think about our achievements. We got a significant raise,

eliminated student fees for TAs/GAs; we have better health care than almost any other grad employees, and union has put pressure on housing to stabilize housing fees.

Also let us know what you think we should be doing in the long term etc.

If anyone would like to invite me or someone else to speak to your group, please speak to me. You can also take a stack to share, send them back by campus mail. There's also an e-mail address on the bottom.

There is a general membership meeting on November 30th 12-2 pm to discuss our plans, elect a new Steering Committee, etc.

D. Proposals from the floor

Rafael Greenblatt: Ryan Fowler and I are circulating copies of a motion calling on the Rutgers administration to limit its cooperation with military recruiters on campus. Please let us know what you think of it; we will discuss it further and vote on it at the next meeting. We hope that our representatives will introduce a similar motion into the University Senate.

III. Old business

No old business.

IV. Reports

A. Executive

There will be an informal meeting after this with umbrella groups (RAPPS, LISSA, etc.) to discuss their issues

B. Treasurer

If you send in your post-event reports faster you will get your money faster. If everyone turns them in at once there will be a backlog, so please don't wait until the end of their semester. Sign your contracts if you haven't already, otherwise we can't give you any money

C. Internal Committees

1. Social/Cultural

Halloween party had alcohol. Get involved.

2. Publications (vacant)

Carlos Diuk: Julie E. Is back but will be gone next semester. If you have a publication and need her help contact her soon.

3. Student Affairs

No representative present.

4. ISAC

No representative present.

5. EAC

No representative present.

6. Sustainability

Mike C: Thanks to those who commented on greening of College Avenue, Scott and I are putting the info together. Apparently University did not get too much comment on sustainability issues, so thanks to those of you who did give input.

D. External committees

1. RSC Board

Carlos D: this mysteriously changed from a governing board to an advisory board, no-one knows how. No-one knows what will happen when student centers are combined, I am trying to find out especially with respect to the GSL. It also appears that the undergrad representatives are all RSC employees. The former GSL on Busch is no longer.

2. DCC

Ryan F: it's the same on Douglass. People are constantly getting new bosses, it's strange. The Douglass GSL was renovated, but no one seems to use it, so I can't see any point in continuing to push for it. I have the e-mail for the person to contact. If we don't start using it we won't get it.

Tim McManus, RAPPS: We tried to use of this room: we were blocked our group because we wanted to serve alcohol.

Ryan F: be warned that Douglass campus center is overwhelmed during mealtimes because a dining hall was closed. Pizzeria Uno is supposed to solve that, they will be giving a cut of the money to the DSC. New security cameras being put up at DSC, they are soliciting input about where to put them, let me know if you have anything to say about that. Once again, no one has any idea what is going into unifying the administration. Doesn't seem like anything big.

Mike C: there has been a problem with use of the Graduate Student Lounge on Tuesdays and Thursdays because a rowdy group of undergraduates seems to be here a lot.

Ryan F: When I'm here they're not loud because I yell at them. The RSC person at the desk has been helpful in keeping people quiet. I'm not sure what is an appropriate solution, I like the idea of it being fairly loose.

Question from the floor: why not check IDs, restrict use to graduate students?

Ryan: practicalities, also most other users aren't a problem. Also the money to pay the person at the desk will run out around march.

3. Board of Trustees

Ryan Fowler: Gateway project (the big building by the train station) - there is a lawsuit about eminent domain between Devco and property owners (neubies, NJ Books, etc.). Devco is expected to win. Some concern in the Board of Trustees about the project, maybe it doesn't need to be that huge, obscenely profitable. Rutgers is not in a party the lawsuit as such but it is a concerned party. I would like to limit the size of the project, feel free to contact me with any thoughts. LSC and College Town are being rethought. Previously there was an "if we build it they will come" attitude, also the two projects were kept separate for no reason. President McCormick and V.P. Blimling are discussing what Livingston campus should be a few years down the road - professional? Sciences? Humanities? Once that is decided there will be a better idea of what housing, what stores, etc. It's all open - they might relocate departments etc., almost a clean slate- everything was built in the 60s and they are thinking in terms of starting over. It seems like a good thing that they are thinking about things in a coordinated way

With the redesign of College Avenue, McCormick has the final say on everything. The jury is discussing which company to hire, then McCormick will decide, then afterwards work out a design with them. This is an important report, I have some time on the microphone when it is discussed so let me know if you have anything I should bring up. When we get a report I will discuss it more.

Mike C: I don't think that the Rutgers administration is really thinking about ecological issues, in contrast to University of California for example.

Ryan F: it is a big board and there are some members who think that the design should be sustainable, and also not high-maintenance. Right now RU is putting off a lot of maintenance. Also let me know if anything is dangerous.

Brian Vancil: has this money gone into mowing?

Ryan F: seems like there is a lot of mowing. A lot of heating, repairs, etc, hasn't been done. Millions have been put into capital campaign which will supposedly raise a billion dollars, I'm a little skeptical. I'm going to look into the mowing.

Brian V: wouldn't it send a message about using the budget right if we didn't mow the grass so much.

Ryan F: Absolutely. There were various cuts, will be more next semester.

Scott B: apparently a lot of fake numbers are out there about how many people were not rehired, how many sections were cut, etc. The AAUP is looking into the numbers and a lot of them just don't match up. Rutgers did fire a lot of people in the cashier's office in ASB.

Ryan F: this allows credit card companies to make money online on transaction fees etc.

Scott B: All of the carpenters have been fired.

Ryan F: there is a big mess there. Also, did everyone know that Rutgers hired

an ad company to design a new logo? Apparently our image is vague. It's a huge project and the result is a new logo looks remarkably like the R in the College Avenue MPR. Existing things aren't going to be changed. It cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It was before the budget cuts, though. The new logo will be phased in over five years.

The Board of Trustees is requesting that the university conduct "targeted divesting" of businesses related to the government of the Sudan (not simply with individual Sudanese).

Mike C: do we actually do business with Sudan?

RF: Apparently we do. It's not a huge amount of money, but it's something.

4. University Senate

No report.

5. Executive Committee of the Graduate School

Brian Vancil: I'm sorry for not being at previous meeting. The Executive Committee is talking a lot about budget cuts. There were no cuts to fellowships or stipends. Also the Graduate School continued to pay the same amount towards health care for fellows. Funding for the graduate school decreased by about \$100,000, the school is trying to retain core services so services (advising etc) should still be there even if they are less sparkly. There is a discussion about the ongoing reorganization in the university. Some talk about electronic theses. RU is starting to accept theses in electronic form, but there are still bugs and it doesn't entirely work. This will make it easier for other people to see your thesis. We also discussed the capital campaign. We are hoping to get targeted contributions to the Graduate School from people with lots of money, there was also discussion of what we would like to do with the money. Dean Cyzewski is trying to get more grants and other sources of income.

Ryan Fowler: what grants are these? Are these specifically for the grad program?

Brian V: some are from outside, some are internal grants that would be used to fund travel, a grad student emergency loan fund, etc.

Carlos D: We also submitted a proposal for a graduate student center. It won't happen soon but maybe someone out there will give us money for it.

Parking and Transportation:

Ryan F:

If you have questions, for example about how the about how permit costs are decided, please email me so that I can send them on to the person who is making that decision.

V. Question time and announcements

Question, Brian Vancil: Didn't we have a representative on a committee about computing?

Carlos: We did. I will look into that and see what happened to the committee.

Scott B: please hand in the bargaining survey.

Mason Gross Visual arts grad students have a show this Thursday, with a reception, there will be works in various media. Also wine and refreshments.

Brian V: On November 30th, there is an event titled Frontiers of Pharmaceuticals. Biosciences will bring in people to talk about current areas of research.

Carlos D: remember that starting this year if you have an event that is open to the public you need to post it on the GSA calender and send an announcement to Naomi by the previous Sunday.