



GRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

9 October, 2013
October Assembly Meeting
Jadwin Hall 102
5:59-7:10 pm

President Eisgruber makes his opening remarks:

- Newly-installed President Eisgruber is in the midst of a listening tour
- He is interested in regularly meeting with the GSG during the course of his presidency.
- He stresses the importance of graduate students to the University and more generally, the importance of training future scholars for the academy. Graduate students bring new perspectives to research and are integral to the training of undergraduates.
- He is aware that graduate school is a demanding time and that right now there are pressures on research funding that may affect how graduate students are funded in the future. He notes that he is aware this will affect other Universities and will affect the job market for graduate students.
- Finally, he notes that graduate students today move into a variety of career tracks – in academia and outside of the academy – and that Princeton graduate students must be well-prepared for those career paths.

Question and Answer session:

Academic Life:

- **Do you intend to expand the undergraduate student body?**
 - There are no immediate plans to expand. However, if we can preserve the basic characteristics of a Princeton education, we should consider taking more students so that the opportunity to attend Princeton can be made available to more of the 27,000 applicants to the undergraduate program (only 7% are accepted currently).
- **How do you see the relationship between Princeton's mission as an educational institution and as a research institution? Do you think that these missions complement each other, or must a tradeoff occur?**
 - These two missions complement; however, the teaching opportunities at Princeton are different than at some other institutions.
- **The lack of professional schools handicaps Princeton as a research institution in certain ways. How do you think Princeton can compete with its peers?**
 - This is a strength. There are certain respects in which we're advantaged – for instance, there is less soft money at Princeton. Certain kinds of interdisciplinary work flow better at an institution like Princeton as compared to universities with medical schools. For example, the Molecular Biology and Neuroscience programs are designed to encourage collaborations with Physics or Computer Science in ways that would be harder to take advantage of elsewhere. The research outcomes Princeton researchers have produced are evidence that there isn't a handicap.
- **Does the presupposition that we should expand the undergrad program if we can extend to the graduate program? If so, what size could we expand it to?**

- Yes, however we have to be careful, given the job markets we're feeding into (some programs have chosen to reduce their graduate program in light of the current tight job markets). The graduate student body grows differently than the undergraduate student body. Bed spaces limit the number of undergraduates. As we grow new programs the graduate program increases in size. This happened recently when the Neuroscience program was developed.
- **Many graduate students need more time to publish work not related to their dissertation. A lot of students find that when they're done with their time of full funding (after year 5), they need to take on a large teaching burden, which adds to difficulty with finishing.**
 - Princeton has in the past been good at keeping the time to degree down, and President Eisgruber doesn't want to see the job market prolong this time. Going forward, we may have to reevaluate what is the appropriate model for funding graduate students. We may need to maintain higher levels of support to attain the same outcomes we had in the past. If we decide it's more important to maintain higher levels of support, then perhaps it would make sense to slightly reduce the size of the graduate student body.
- **Princeton emphasizes preparation of graduate students for academia. There is less preparation and support for students who pursue other career paths. Do you think we should correct this? If so, how?**
 - It is the case that the Princeton graduate programs emphasize the preparation of graduate students for academia. However, it is important to prepare grad students for non-academic careers and it is true that we haven't prepared students for this as well as we should have in the past.
 - We need to do more work on this front in Career Services for both graduate students and undergrads. There is an ongoing search for an Executive Director of Career Services. This is in recognition of the fact that there are new career pathways and new methods of finding careers today. It is also important to help faculty to embrace this.
- **There's only one person who works with graduate students in Career Services even though the graduate student body is about half the size of the undergraduate student body. Moreover, there is no office to work with postdocs. They are an important part of teaching because they mentor many graduate students and undergraduates and they deserve attention from the University as well.**
 - You're right to raise concern about Postdocs and you're correct they haven't been given enough attention. The treatment of graduate students has changed in many ways over time and the number and importance of postdocs has grown and we haven't caught up with it.
- **How do you see the role of graduate students on campus? Is it purposeful that the incoming class of graduate students are not welcomed on the website and that there are not Pre-Reads for graduate students?**
 - Grad students and undergrads come to the University at different stages in their lives and with different needs and interests. Graduate students think of faculty as future potential colleagues. They're engaged with the faculty around them and are tied to their departments in different ways. The welcomes for grad students and undergraduates are therefore different.
 - The undergrads are supposed to have a common intellectual experience. They need to learn how to talk about intellectual ideas outside of the classroom and a lot of work has been done to integrate residential life with their academic work in the past few decades. Graduate students have already learned these lessons

and they are at a different stage in their lives – most new grad students are about 7 years older than the average freshman.

- **It is good to be very nurturing to undergraduate students. However, a parent who nurtures the younger child makes the older child feel neglected. In the same way, it is important to make the graduate students feel welcomed. Grad student could be better mentors if we interacted with undergraduates more. I've had to seek out opportunities on my own to meet undergraduates.**
 - It is important to be welcoming of both populations. But the support provided should be different. For instance, faculty in your department know about you and reach out to you before you arrive in a way that they don't with the undergraduates. Pre-Read is open to be read by anyone – not just undergraduates.
- **No one would argue that the needs of undergrads and graduate students are the same. However, while there are social structures available to support graduate students in the form of their advisor (some are more helpful than others) the University as a whole has an obligation to support its graduate students.**
 - We charge 40% of undergraduates full tuition. We provide support to all graduate students. We may need to consider whether is it better to invest in residential life for grad students or whether we need to push stipends higher. If we do invest in residential life, should we invest in housing or in other areas? We care deeply about these issues and need to find the right way to make these tradeoffs.
- **The most important form of support the University can provide to graduate students is to offer housing. The University has done a comparatively good job, but as it's in the position to do a better job – is reconsidering the decision to reduce the percentage of graduate students housed by the University from 79% to 70% something you would be willing to do? This particularly affects older graduate students. Princeton is a unique town where there aren't affordable housing options.**
 - We make an extraordinary investment to provide housing to graduate students.
 - Butler is past the time when it's sustainable. Butler is attractive in that it's garden level and has open space. However, this is not a pricepoint of housing that we can recreate in compliance with code.
 - Stanford also houses about 70% of its graduate students, but no other Universities provide this support to graduate students.
 - We did a lot of surveying of graduate students when the Lakeside Apartments were being planned, and they are designed to meet graduate student needs.
 - Although the housing market is very restricted in Princeton, there are other options available besides University housing.
- **As far as I know, housing is the number one concern among graduate students. Student life is interesting, and academics at Princeton are top-notch. The reason I came to Princeton is because of how thoughtfully graduate student life is put together. I'm an older student with a partner who came to Princeton thinking about starting a family. For someone in that position, Butler is extraordinarily attractive. The problem with Lakeside is that it's so different from Butler and that this leaves fewer options for graduate students overall.**
 - Butler is at the end of its lifespan – we would have sustained that option if we could. The housing we're replacing Butler with is in response to graduate student surveying. We might need to recognize that there is a subset of the graduate student population with special needs. Overall, graduate students should be more concerned with their academic careers than with their housing.

- **The GSG actively fights for more awareness that there are still students here in the summer. Many graduate students feel that undergraduates are prioritized and that when they are not on campus there is an undue loss of services.**
 - We have made some changes in the past few years in response to this issue. For example, a graduate student was injured several years ago at a time when McCosh was closed, and in response we increased the summer hours.
- **I take issue with your statement that graduate students should be more concerned with their academics than their housing – people need to take care of their basic needs first.**
 - Increasing stipends and investing in new transportation options may be a better solution than increasing the amount of University housing.

