

Minutes for the February 29 Extraordinary GSG Meeting

As Eszter Hargittai, GSG Chair opened the meeting, the representatives and officers introduced themselves for the benefit of the guests of the GSG assembly.

Item 1: Report of the Fact Finding Committee

As requested the Fact Finding Committee summarized its understanding of the D-Bar situation up to the present.

* Although minor amendments were suggested by other members of the Fact Finding Committee, Nathan Marsh furnished the bulk of the report.

* The Bar Czars went on strike on Friday as of Friday afternoon. The scheduled Salsa night actually did take place, though it was moved to the New Graduate College Common Room.

Afterward, a party was set up that moved from one location to the next. The moves were punctuated by the activation of fire alarms. One member of the Fact Finding Committee remarked that the evening was a particularly noisy one.

* The Graduate College House Committee has submitted to the Deans of the Graduate School a proposed schedule in which the D-Bar would gradually be made open to all graduate students, resident or otherwise.

The plan is for 200 non - residents to be able to join on April 16. On May 1, an additional 100 will be admitted. Thereafter, students will be allowed to join the Graduate College House Committee in increments of 100 on a monthly basis.

One of the essential conditions for the schedule was for the Debasement Bar to resume operation immediately in order to establish a "track record" of responsible operation.

Item 2: Adrian Banner, Chair of the Graduate College House Committee, provided the House Committee's Perspective on the Debasement Bar Proposal.

* Adrian essentially reiterated Nathan's description of the D-Bar proposal. He also mentioned that all graduate students will be given access to the D-Bar by September 1 if the proposal is implemented. Evidently, non - residents gaining access to the Debasement Bar will be given stickers indicating their status as House Committee members. The proposal was drafted by Adrian Banner, Manish Vachharajani, and Ulrich Struve. As Adrian

mentioned

toward the end of the meeting, the stickers will be issued on a "first come - first serve" basis. Adrian assured the assembly that advertising of the presence of the stickers would be adequate.

* Adrian emphasized that the proposed schedule is contingent on the D-Bar opening as soon as possible in order to establish a suitable track record by operating responsibly for at least a few weeks. Failure to open swiftly would mean a pushing back of the proposed schedule.

* Mr. Banner expressed confidence that the House Committee would readily approve the proposal. He seemed uncertain, however, about how the problem of staffing the Debasement Bar would be solved.

* In replying to a question from Karthick Ramakrishnan, GSG Treasurer, Adrian confessed that indeed the House Committee had intended that the D-Bar be open to all graduate students. However, Adrian felt that as a negotiator, he was pleased with the outcome. He noted that the Deans of the Graduate School had come very far in agreeing to the proposal.

Item 3: Adrian's speech was followed by more wide ranging questions and

discussion. This item attempts to provide a rough chronicle of what was mentioned.

* Prompted by Karthick, Nathan Marsh attempted to explain the concern of the Deans. Nathan indicated that the Deans might have felt that the recent rash of D-Bar problems was directly connected with the considerably expansion of the D-Bar's patronage over the past two years. As Nathan remarked, "Three years ago the D-Bar patronage was one third what it was last month".

* Karthick suggested that the decision to restrict D-Bar attendance to Graduate College/Annex residents was the result of a personal conflict. If personal matters played a role in the policy change, Karthick asserted, then the Graduate Student Body has been done a great disservice.

* Cristin Howley, a member of the D-Bar Fact Finding Committee, said that during the meeting of the FFC with the Graduate Deans, she formed the impression that the Deans were deeply concerned about reports of misconduct at the Debasement Bar.

Cristin also reported that the Deans had explained that it is not in their interest to close the D-Bar. Indeed, Deans Wilson and Montero said that although they could shut down the D-Bar at any time, they would prefer not to.

* As the discussion shifted to more general aspects of the policies of the Deans and interaction of graduate students with the administration, Eszter reminded the assembly that the extraordinary meeting had been convened chiefly to discuss matters directly related to the recent events involving the D-Bar.

She agreed to place some of the more general concerns on the agenda of the March 8 GSG meeting.

* The claim was made that the Graduate Student Government had been far too quiescent during the D-Bar crisis.

Eszter challenged the claim. She pointed to the establishing of the Fact Finding Committee, its publication of a report on the global lists, and the issuing of a resolution on Dbar access as concrete actions of the GSG. Eszter also mentioned that the GSG had asked Adrian Banner in the Fall if it could do anything to assist. In reply, Adrian suggested that it would be best if the GSG not become involved in the D-Bar situation.

* Don Priour argued that Dean's desire to impose a brief period of restricted membership may have been prompted by a desire for the inspection of the Debasement Bar by the Princeton Borough to pass uneventfully. However, a D-Bar employee ruled out the possibility by revealing that the inspection had actually taken place in December.

* Adrian explained that, in fact, the Deans felt that the Graduate College House Committee had acted too swiftly in amending their constitution to change the membership policy. The Deans thought that the lack of immediate recognition of the amendment by the administration prompted the strike of the D-Bar staff.

Mr. Banner pointed out that the Dean's policy might instead have caused the strike, a possibility the Graduate Deans acknowledged.

* Adrian expressed an opinion that the eventual total recognition by the Deans of the amendment under the House Committee's proposal represents a considerable softening of their stance. Eric Adelizzi, GSG Web Page Administrator House Committee Secretary and a member of the D-Bar Fact-Finding Committee, also recognized the extent to which the Deans had compromised in our favor.

* Mike Levi suggested that the GSG attempt to understand the Deans' policy regarding the D-Bar. Since, he said, it may well serve as a precedent for future decisions, it is important for us to understand the administration's rationale in the decisions it has reached.

Item 4: The GSG decided whether to endorse the Graduate College House D-Bar proposal.

* Jim Vere made a motion that the GSG endorse the proposal Adrian presented earlier. Some discussion ensued. It was argued that the GSG ought to poll the Graduate Student Body on the matter. Others in the assembly argued that the time available was too short for the GSG to conduct a poll.

* The discussion broadened into an exploration of whether that D-Bar proposal could harm the D-Bar as an institution. Adrian maintained that it would not hurt the D-Bar. During this segment of the discussion, Mike Levi inquired what the purpose of the "cooling off period" is and whether it is even necessary. Mr. Banner, in reply, said that the Graduate Deans only meant for it to establish a track record for the D-Bar.

* Karthick provided a rough sketch of the endorsement, and the assembly voted to endorse the Graduate College House Committee's proposal.

* Nathan reiterated Karthick's wish that the endorsement accept the D-Bar proposal as the best practical solution, but that it also reaffirm the GSG's belief that the D-Bar would in the ideal case be opened immediately to all graduate students.

* Based on the discussion, Eric prepared the text of a letter to be sent to Deans Wilson and Montero, as well as to Ulrich Struve. As Eric read the letter, the assembly supplied minor corrections and amendments. The final letter appears below.

"Although the GSG has several regrets about the nature of discussions leading up to this compromise, and although the GSG finds this compromise short of the ideal, we endorse this compromise between the House Committee and the Deans of the Graduate School.

The GSG reaffirms the principle of having the Debasement Bar open to all graduate students, but we pragmatically understand the limitations of the current situation."

* The assembly voted to send the letter to the Graduate Deans, and to Ulli. Prompted by Mike Levi's request that the letter be sent to the entire Graduate Student Body, it was suggested that the letter be included in the February 15 mini - minutes. Although the assembly seemed to be in accord with this idea, a vote was not issued on the matter. [At the time of writing, the letter had gone out to all graduate students via the mailing of the Mini - Minutes.]

Item 5: The formation of a Committee to Investigate Communication between the Deans and the Graduate Student Body.

* Karthick made a motion that a committee be formed to investigate the "working relationship" between the Graduate Student Body and the Deans of the Graduate School.

* Kamal Khouri suggested a duty of the administration is to maintain active and candid communication with the Graduate Student Body.

* Don Priour said that during the Fact Finding Committee's meeting with Deans Montero and Wilson, the FFC was informed that the Deans had remained relatively silent in order to avoid causing a stir among graduate students that would be harmful to the D-Bar in the long run.

Kamal disputed the claim, pointing to the great span of time over which the D-Bar had been under scrutiny by the administration. He felt the silence was due to other motives.

* Discussion progressed toward determining specifically the committee's mandate and its composition. Eric Adelizzi expressed his opposition to the formation of the committee on the grounds that its mandate was nebulous. In the event that the committee was formed, Mr. Adelizzi recommended that the committee not be composed either of individuals belonging to the D-Bar Fact Finding Committee or of Assembly members active in the House Committee.

% The committee's mandate shall be to investigate issues

of communication between graduate students and the Deans of the Graduate School.

% Jason Brownlee, Simon Keller, Beverley McKeon, and Karthick Ramakrishnan volunteered for the committee.

* The assembly voted the committee into existence and approved the proposed membership.

Item 6: Miscellaneous Concerns

* The GSG Treasurer reminded the assembly that the GSLA had reserved a room in McCosh for Thursday to conduct a public forum on the D-Bar matter. The meeting was scheduled for noon.

* Responding to a question from Eszter, Eric and Adrian informed the GSG assembly that the Graduate College House Committee would likely decide on the D-Bar proposal the following evening.

* Owing to a conflict of interest due to his being elected Secretary of the Graduate College House Committee, Eric Adelizzi tendered his resignation from the Fact Finding Committee. Members of the assembly expressed regret at Eric's departure from the Fact Finding Committee.

Item 7: The GSG Decides on Whether to Cohost a Public Forum

* Karthick asked that discussion be opened on the GSG cohosting a public forum.

* Eric argued that the Thursday forum had been organized in a manner confrontational to the Deans, and suggested that the GSG not involve itself.

* After additional discussion, the GSG voted not to cohost Thursday's forum.

Item 8: Adjournment.

* At C.A. 9:40pm, the meeting adjourned.