

Minutes of the July 27, 2000 GSG Meeting

At C.A. 7:00pm, GSG Chair Lauren Hale called the meeting to order. The meeting took place in Room 309 of the Frist Campus Center. As usual, members of the GSG Assembly were asked to introduce themselves to our guest. In the case of the July meeting, our guest was Dr. Rao from the Ombuds Office.

Item 0: The attendance sheet circulated and pizza became available to the Assembly.

Item 1: Lauren Hale introduced Dr. Anu Rau, the University Ombuds officer. Dr. Rao received her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in the field of city and regional planning. Dr. Rao developed an interest in organizational behavior as she pursued her thesis research.

Before assuming her role as Ombuds officer, Dr. Rao had accumulated a great deal of experience in a consulting role with universities.

In beginning her remarks, Dr. Rao mentioned that some graduate students had complained about a feeling of "compartmentalization". She explained that an important goal for her is the effort to establish among graduate students a sense of community. Later during the discussion, Dr. Rao handed out brochures and leaflets relevant to her office.

Three themes central to the purpose of the Ombuds office, dubbed the "three C's", are civility, community, and conflict resolution.

The ombudsman institution began in Denmark and Sweden. It was intended to facilitate input from sectors of industry that would not ordinarily have a voice.

At Princeton, the Ombuds office serves partly as an informal means of resolving conflicts. It does not supplant formal means of resolution, but it exists as an alternative.

Signed agreements reached in the Ombuds office are regarded by the University of formal agreements.

The University may take action against violations of the these contracts.

- # Dr. Rao favors very gentle approaches and peaceful resolutions of conflicts. She stated that in most cases, less heavy-handed approaches have been effective.

Dr. Rao described her role as that of a listener. She stated her commitment to maintaining confidentiality, except in cases that one or more persons would be placed in danger in the absence of a breach of confidentiality.

- # Retaliation is a negative action which is committed in reponse to a report to the Ombuds office by a complainant. Retaliation is against University policy, and is strongly sactioned when it occurs.
- # Dr. Rao discussed in some detail several levels of conflict resolution which are discussed in Negotiation Theory.

% Establishing a dialogue is perhaps the simplest method for handling conflicts. In most cases, Dr. Rao explained, dialogues are established between large groups of individuals. In such cases, the role of the Ombuds office is largely to provide for the parties a convenient forum for discussion.

% Mediation is the next level of involvement. In the process of mediation, the Ombuds office attempts to interpret and understand the needs of the two parties in conflict and thereby facilitates discussion. Mediation is Dr. Rao's favorite approach.

% Arbitration gives the third party the most power. When arbitration takes place, a third party reviews the conflict and its circumstances. He or she then reaches a decision to resolve the conflict. Both parties are then compelled to accept the decision of the arbitrator. Dr. Rao personally views arbitration as a last resort approach.

- # Eszter Hargittai enquired whether conflicts involving

thesis advisors had been brought to the Ombuds office. Dr. Rao indicated that this has occasionally occurred, though she speculated that many more such conflicts exist, but have never been brought to her office. Graduate students, she said, face a unique situation in that the power differentials as well as the stakes are very high.

The Ombuds office collaborates very closely with the Counseling office. Often, the Ombuds staff makes referrals to the Counseling office and vice versa. In fact, Dr. Rao is a former psychological counselor and is in possession of a clinical license.

% The Ombuds office deals with the "what" questions.

% The Counseling center, Dr. Rao stated, deals with the "why" questions.

A primary objective of the Ombuds office is to promote an attitude of respect among members of the University community. The racial and ethnic harrassment response system is a part of this objective.

Dr. Rao had propposed to Dean Wilson the formation of a peer mediation program for graduate students. Peer mediation allows students to learn mediation skills. It also helps to make the community aware of important concerns and issues by fostering an atmosphere of mutual accountability.

Dr. Rao asked for those interested to contact her. She estimated that between 7 and 10 students would be needed to assist. A typical mediation load, she explained, might consist of one or two mediations per year.

Dr. Rao was urged to partake of the pizza and then excused herself from the meeting.

Item 2: Approval of the minutes. After brief discussion, the Assembly voted to approve the minutes for the June 28 meeting.

Item 3: The GSG Welcoming Dance

- # The hope is to obtain a relativeley inexpensive Disc Jockey for the event in the Chancellor Green in September.
- # Lauren asked for assistance in planning the event. In particular, she suggested that a committee be formed. Bill Jordan volunteered to head the welcoming dance committee. Important work remains in deciding the theme of the dance.
- # The orientation schedule will be available at the dance. Lauren happily noted that the welcoming dance is listed on the orientation schedule.

Item 4: The Ice Cream Social

- # There are tentive plans for an ice cream social on August 16. There was general agreement that the ice cream socials have been well attended and that they have been very enjoyable events.

Item 5: Election of an Interim Social Chair

- # Lauren Hale has combined the duties of Chair and Social Chair for a number of meetings. Thus, it seemed appropriate to select an interim GSG Social Chair. Lauren nominated Yesim Tozan to serve as Social Chair. She was unanimously elected by the GSG Assembly to the position.

Item 6: Report of the Web Page Administrator

- # Olgica Bakajin has provided a copy of the Princeton Thesis for theses written in latex. (The author has found this template to be very helpful in the preparation of his thesis). In addition, it was suggested that final doctoral procedures for each department be made available on the web for the convenience of those completing their degrees. Eric Adelizzi, GSG Web Page Administrator, requested that anyone with information that might be useful concerning theses and the graduation process contact him; and he will try to create a web page on the subject.

Item 7: Constitutional Matters

- # The GSG passed unanimously a by-law which would waive the

pro/con positions on constitutional amendments in favor of a 85% super majority for the pro side. In the new system, the super majority mentioned above will have the power to advance an amendment to the referendum stage without a con version present. In a second vote, the Assembly approved an identical by-law to take effect upon ratification of the proposed constitution.

- # Regarding the referendum, the Assembly learned that the global list won't be complete until October. Partly as a consequence of this fact, the votes at the referendum will be collected by paper ballot.

The Assembly also decided that the constitutional referendum would take place entirely at the registration that will be held in mid September. Thus, first year students and returning students alike will be able to vote at registration, though the votes of the two groups will be separated by a day since first year students register separately.

Item 8: CIT Policies

- # Eszter reported on some aspects of CIT policies which may not be generally known. What is of concern, Eszter explained, is the fact that electronic data maintained by the University is subject to access by University officials. This includes both voicemail and email. Email, for example, is archived permanently for future access.
- # Another issue, brought up by Steven Miller, is the endeavor to achieve parity with the undergraduates in computer resources. Evidently, the graduate computer clusters are inferior in size and quality to their counterparts in the undergraduate dormitories.

Item 9: The Activities Fair

- # With two provisos, Dean Dunne has permitted graduate students to participate in the Activities Fair held annually at the time of registration for the benefit of incoming students. The two conditions are:

- % There must, at the Fair, be a clear

distinction between the undergraduate and graduate advertisements.

% All undergraduates must be allowed to join activities advertised by graduate students. The email addresses of interested undergraduates must be accepted by graduate students staffing the Fair.

A different but related matter is the fact that graduate students cannot serve as officers in undergraduate organizations. As Eszter noted, this has a negative impact upon both graduates and undergraduates. Since undergraduates are largely absent during the summer months, many of these organizations dwindle or vanish over the summer because graduate students are unable to step in as temporary officers. In addition, both undergraduates and graduates miss opportunities to interact with each other.

Item 10: GSG souvenirs for incoming and returning students

In the previous meeting, the GSG decided to purchase souvenirs for the returning and first year graduate students to promote awareness of the GSG.

The main constraint, Lauren noted, is cost. GSG treasurer, Karthick Ramakrishnan, had set a guideline of \$400. What is more, the cost per item of some of the nicer choices exceeds \$1. Ultimately, after some discussion, the Assembly decided that souvenirs would be made available to all incoming graduate students.

There seemed to be a general sense that the cost of the purchase might well cross the \$400 threshold. However, to lower the cost, it seemed reasonable to gamble that fewer than the full 1800 graduate students enrolled at Princeton would arrive to claim their GSG tokens. Perhaps, the Assembly pondered, 1200 or even fewer of the mementos would be needed. Though a specific item had not been chosen by the July meeting, selection had been refined to a few possibilities. An example is a calendar bearing the GSG logo on one side.

- # In a related development, the APGA has announced its intention to distribute computer mouse pads to help increase awareness of the APGA among current graduate students.

Item 11: New Business

- # Lauren read an announcement from the McGraw Teaching Center. An AI resource fair will take place at the center on September 6 and 7. The intent is to acquaint graduate students with services that the McGraw center offers to assist with teaching.
- # Jacqueline Mintz of the McGraw Teaching Center has asked for a graduate student volunteer to serve on the center's advisory committee. Cindy Tobery expressed interest in serving the committee, and she was unanimously selected by the Assembly for the position.
- # There will be an August meeting with the Board of Trustees. Lauren Hale, David Linsenmeier, and Karthick Ramakrishnan are writing a proposal arguing for the presence of two young graduate alumni representatives on the Board of Trustees.
- # An interesting vision survey can be found on the USG web page. The survey is intriguing because it deals with subjects of keen interest to graduate students such as healthcare on campus and electronic privacy issues.
- # Since the recording secretary would be leaving Princeton on August 16, he announced his resignation and requested that the process begin to find a new recording secretary. Steven Miller and Eric Adelizzi volunteered to take the minutes at the August meeting.
- # The next meeting was tentatively set for August 30.

Item 12: Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:47pm. The next meeting (tentatively) shall take place in room 309 of the new Frist Center at 6:00pm on August 30.

<Thanks, everyone! I've enjoyed being on the GSG. Don>