

Minutes for the Graduate Student Government Assembly meeting held on Wednesday, June 4, 7:30pm in Frist Campus Center Room 309

AGENDA

I. Call to Order

- A. Approval of the Minutes (May) - Marina Paul

II. Reports

- A. Chair - Christina Hultholm
- B. Social Events - Christina Hultholm
- C. Facilities - Jeff Dwoskin
- D. Health and Life
- E. IRC - Ashley Thrall
- F. Academic Affairs
- G. Campus Relations

III. Decision Items

- A. Letter-writing Campaign Topics

IV. Discussion Items

- A. Passport to the Performing Arts Policy Changes Update
- B. University discussion about Housing Priority

VI. New Business

VII. Adjournment

I. Call to Order

The meeting began at 7:41pm.

A. Approval of the Minutes (May) - Marina Paul

A draft of the minutes for the May 2008 assembly meeting was emailed to assembly members several days in advance of the meeting. A final version will include several suggestions for proofreading or word choice made by assembly members, and a more detailed chair's report from Christina Hultholm (Chair). A motion to approve the May 2007 minutes was approved at the meeting by voice vote.

II. Reports

A. Chair - Christina Hultholm

1. Christina attended the Alumni Leadership Council meeting - Housing and Student Life session – on May 29, 2008.

Below is her summary of the meeting:

Housing

- Increasing demand, decreasing supply; graduate population increasing relative to housing stock
- Emphasis on affordability
- International student dilemma
- Importance of living on or near campus

Campus Shuttle

- Importance to graduate student community
- GSG shuttle survey
- Opposition to transfers, safety concerns, inconvenience
- Weekend, late-night service; shuttles between residences, to shopping areas

Fostering Community

- Solitary nature of graduate work
- Limited opportunities for interdepartmental interaction
- Unrealized positive social and professional externalities
- Need for central gathering place
- Graduate student center

Campus Integration

- Structural impediments - lifestyle, age differences
- Importance of on-campus housing
- Event co-sponsorship with USG
- Increasing visibility on campus - GSG photo contest
- Campus Club

Life after Princeton

- Career advice from working professionals; the “academia bias”
- Preparation for academic and non-academic job-searching
- Graduate alumni networking
- Community and future giving

They seemed really concerned about the housing issue and what the university was doing to deal with it. They also wanted to know what we thought were reasonable rents, what the rents in surrounding areas are, what types of living situations were acceptable to students.

Eileen Guggenheim offered tours of NYC art galleries.

Lots of alumni interest in alumni-student career opportunities – it was suggested that many people would be very excited for such an opportunity.

Encouraged us to go to grad alumni with small requests for funding – especially for social events – as they can relate to grad student problems.

Encouraged us to look into campus tour issues – Undergrad reps give us a bad reputation from the start.

Wanted more justification for why we need a grad student only center, want specific details about what types of resources and space we would want.

Re: shuttle, they were sympathetic to our needs and concerns. They thought it was obvious that we needed weekend service and access to shopping areas, especially if one of the university’s goals is to have fewer people driving to campus or having a car here. Also encouraged us not only to make sure the administrators know what is important to us, but also to make sure they are telling the people making final decisions about these things that what we want and need is important to the university.

2. Exec Retreat

In the last month, ahead of the letter-writing campaign, not-so-new exec met with members of old exec to go over the GSG's past advocacy efforts. A few people were unable to make it to the meeting, so I will be meeting with them this summer to make sure they are brought up to speed.

B. Social Events - Christina Hultholm

Christina's remarks at the assembly meeting are below:

Yi Wang, our social chair, is in California this summer, so Jenna Losh (Corresponding secretary) has been nice enough to take over planning Frist Frolic this summer. She is away this week but wanted me to share with all of you the following information:

*GSG's annual **Frist Frolic** will be held Wednesday, June 25th from 4:30-7pm in conjunction with the Frist Summer Concert series on the Frist South Lawn, where Mike Montrey will be this year's performer. A free barbecue dinner and ice cream will be available for all graduate students and their families. In addition to the funding allotted for this event in the GSG budget, Frist will be co-sponsoring the event, providing an extra \$500. In case of rain, the event will take place in the Frist Dining Area.*

After the concert, we're planning to play music over the speakers from an IPOD. Anyone have a good music collection to volunteer?

C. Facilities - Jeff Dwoskin

Jeff announced that the next graduate housing policy committee meeting would be held on June 12. Jeff and the other graduate students on the committee were going to push wiring the Graduate College for air-conditioning or wiring at least a few spaces, such as the GC coffee house

D. Health and Life – Kelly Kearney

Kelly had nothing to report.

E. IRC - Ashley Thrall

Ashley (Parliamentary Secretary, IRC) had nothing new to report except that the next meeting would be held on June 26, further details to be received by email.

F. Academic Affairs– nothing to report

The committee (co-chairs Kevin Collins (POL) and Silvia Bulow) had nothing new to report. They planned to contact the current president of APGA, Daniel Lopresti, about increasing funding for travel grants.

G. Campus Relations - nothing to report

III. Decision Items

A. Topics for the Summer Letter-Writing Campaign

Discussion points about this year's letter campaign:

1. *Should the GSG impose a limit on the number of letters written?* It was brought up that writing too many letters may spread the efforts of letter writers too thin. In addition, receiving multiple letters may desensitize administrators to graduate students' requests. The goal of the campaign is to have the most enthusiastic, most informed people writing the letters about specific topics; thus the burden of

writing the bulk of the letters should not fall to Exec or a small number of people. Letters would be targeted to specific administrators who are able to respond; thus a letter to change the housing draw system and a letter to increase housing availability are not addressed to the same people.

2. *Is there a detrimental effect of writing certain letters?* Last year, a letter was written in support of anticipated changes to the shuttle plan. However, the specific changes proposed much later by Facilities were not favorable to the graduate students, as revealed in the recent shuttle survey results. Some students expressed their concern that in instances such as this one, the administration may have incorrectly felt that students supported their efforts.
3. *Is it necessary to expend effort on writing a letter on a topic that the administration has already committed to address?* For example, Yaron Ayalon (NES, the Firestone library committee chair) explained that the library staff and administration gave the committee everything they requested or made good arguments for why an issue couldn't be resolved right away. He felt that in this case, it may not be productive for the GSG to write letters to administrators who are fully cooperating already. Silvia Bulow (Academic Affairs Co-Chair) suggested writing letters to administrators who could resolve the requests that were turned down or delayed. Annie Twitty (Press secretary) argued that it was beneficial to get people on paper responding to our requests. Ashley Thrall (Parliamentary Secretary) added that the GSG could write letters thanking/acknowledging administrators for work they had already done. (A letter regarding Firestone library concerns was also discussed later on but not included in the final list of letters)

List of letter topics proposed at the meeting:

1. Request air conditioning in the Graduate College
2. Include additional graduate housing in the Ten Year Campus Plan (separate from housing, separate person to address {Annie Twitty agreed to work on this letter})
3. Address several current housing issues, including accountability/work orders and room draw, and to be addressed to Andrew Kane
 - a. *Request accountability of the housing office, set benchmarks for performance:* Two anecdotes for poor accountability were given:
 - i. a student living in a first floor GC residence had broken blinds and had a lot of privacy issues from exposed first-floor windows. After having no resolution within five weeks this student found out that the work order was sub-contracted out, and Facilities was unable to provide an estimate for when the blinds would be repaired
 - ii. Kelly Kearney (GEO) added that she had also had unresolved work orders that were not sub-contracted (fuses, windows)
 - b. *Increase transparency of housing system decisions*
 - c. *Increase flexibility in move-in/out dates, move to a retention-based system*
Moving to a retention-based system would allow students successful in the room draw to keep their apartments, even if it is a high-demand unit type (such as the studio apartment). some students are having difficulty to get summer housing, staggering move-out dates may alleviate this problem –

stagger move out so people could keep their summer months (more flexibility)

- d. *Room Draw: Assign rooms via a computerized system, offer more options for prioritizing choices by cost and location*

4. Health and life issues (Silvia Bulow and Kelly Kearney agreed to start writing this one)

- a. *Request a greater annual dental subsidy than the current \$125:* Many local dentists are not willing to sign on to the Eastern Dental Plan offered to graduate students. Many graduate students are unsatisfied with both the choice of dentists and the level of coverage offered by the plan. (In contrast, university staff members have two options for dental plans – a limited one similar to the students’ plan and another plan for which they pay \$60/month, where they can choose from a wider variety of dentists). Rather than trying to recruit more dentists, the letter will request a higher annual subsidy than the currently offered \$125, which is just enough to cover one annual visit, rather than the twice yearly visits recommended by dentists.
- b. *Birth control subsidy:* The birth control subsidy provided to students by UHS is only a temporary solution to the University’s loss of the governmental subsidy after the Federal Deficit Reduction Act. In addition, the University’s plan does not cover all birth control options or options for which there is no analogous generic (which is often the case for the newest birth control options). While Chickering does offer coverage after the deductible through the Medco prescription plan, this is still expensive. Currently 545 students receive birth control prescriptions from UHS. This letter would at least a) continue to advocate for law changes and b) re-negotiate a plan with Chickering for a plan that covered all birth control options.
- c. *Child care subsidy:* Princeton recently announced its plans to build a new child care facility in order to accommodate double the number of spaces available for the children of faculty, staff, and students. The facility is part of the Ten Year Campus Plan and is scheduled to open in fall 2001, near the existing child care facilities at 171 Broadmead St. A letter would request the following:
 - i. graduate students’ interests should be represented in planning the facility
 - ii. more information about the tentative plans about facility hours, costs
 - iii. expansion of the SCCAP plan currently offered to graduate students (grants available to eligible graduate students to help them meet the cost of child care, a maximum of \$5000 per child)
- d. extending summer hours of McCosh Health Center
- e. extend summer hours of Dillon Gym

5. keep DCE tuitions low

6. Cost of living issues:

- a. Allow dining plans to increase only with stipend increases
- b. Increase stipends with increases in the cost of living

7. Increase travel grant funding: a letter of support to increase Pri-Comm funds (which Dean Russel discussed in his recent visit to Assembly).
8. Café Vivian renovations: A letter to remind Frist campus center and Dining Services (before completing the renovations) – that the renovations were initiated to give graduate students later night options in the summer and to encourage them to bring back food options in Café Vivian sooner than later.
9. Campus safety issues
 - a. *Improve parking lot /walkway safety*: A letter will be written to encourage increasing security measures such as increasing lighting or cameras in parking lots in student residences, and maintaining blue light safety phones along graduate student residences. This letter will also follow up on recent Public Safety efforts such as Campus Safety Walks to assess pedestrian safety along walkways to campus residences. Students shared the following anecdotes at the meeting:
 - i. There are no Blue light phones along Butler Apartments
 - ii. The campus has seen a recent rash of burglaries
 - iii. Keren Leiby added that she has repeatedly called for replacing bulbs to the parking lot lights in New Lawrence, with no success.
 - b. *Update the apartment e-mail notification system/list-serve to include partners/roommates of residents*: In September, Housing sent out e-mail notifications about a bomb threat to Lawrence apartments to almost all Lawrence residents via a list-serve. The newest residents in Lawrence did NOT receive this email (presumably because they were not yet added to an email list) and were notified only later through a Lawrence-specific list-serve. Spouses of residents were not informed either. Similarly, an e-mail notification about a bomb threat to E-QUAD was sent to faculty and staff, but not to students.
 - c. *Offer P-Rides Shuttle service in the summer*

This list would be sent to Assembly via e-mail for final approval.

The following timeline was proposed at the meeting:

July – obtain anecdotes

Mid-July - produce drafts

August 1 – send letters to administrators

IV. Discussion Items

A. Passport to the Performing Arts Policy Changes Update

The Passport to the Performing Arts allows students to attend performances at discounted rates or free of charge. The booklets are sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (ODUS), and distributed to students in September of every year and are valid through June. Two changes to the program were proposed by ODUS recently:

1. Eliminate paper booklets and put passport functionality on the PUID/Tiger-Card (This change is expected to happen in two year's time)

2. Reduce number of passport categories to two: Student Events and Non-Student Events (the “Just in time” category will be removed and now 8 tiger tickets can be used for events from 2 weeks up to that same day)

These changes were discussed earlier over e-mail, and Assembly’s feedback was sent to ODUS.

B. University discussion about Housing Priority

The University has started a dialogue with the housing committees about how many priority housing spots should be given out. Currently a total of 45 students, including members of the residential graduate housing committees, the GSG, and community associates, receive housing priority in the Room Draw. The fairness of giving priority housing spots became an issue recently because of an anticipated housing crunch due to the increasing graduate student population at Princeton and concerns about housing priorities being taken away spots from lower-year students (who have higher housing priority than upper-year students in the current room draw system).

A discussion was initiated at the meeting. Major points:

1. Annie Twitty (Press Secretary) felt concerned about whether the GSG could discuss this issue in an unbiased fashion. Jeff Dwoskin (Facilities chair) felt that since the merit of future priority slots (and not the current ones) was being discussed, the GSG could have this discussion.
2. 45 (housing slots) is not very many, and the number may be misrepresentative. Silvia Bulow argued that some of those students who receive the priority choose not to use it (by living off-campus, such as Silvia Bulow, the former Parliamentary Secretary) or are junior enough to receive high priority in the room draw anyway – so the number of students who actually use a priority slot in the draw may be much less than 45. Yaron Ayalon (NES) pointed out that 45 allocated for the priority spots was not a high percentage of the 1500 total spots anyway - reducing the spots by even a sizable amount, such as 10, does not increase the chances of housing success very much for other students!
3. The students who are displaced are upper-year students, who have low chances of obtaining graduate student housing. Hilary Bergsieker (PSY) pointed out that many of the students being displaced by the priority slots are most likely upper-year students, and some of the students receiving priority slots are the few upper-year students who serve on these committees.
4. Giving housing priority to committee members has justification – it provides incentives to students to get involved, improving the applicant pools for committee elections (as well as rewarding students for their efforts). For example, in previous years the GSG executive committee received few applicants, and lost interested applicants to other committees that do provide housing. For the past elections held in 2008 for GSG committee members, all (except one) were contested.
5. The problem may be the perception that the priority is undeserved or there are free-riders receiving benefits, according to Hilary Bergsieker (PSY). Ashley Thrall (Parliamentary Secretary) added that the issue may be a misconception about the work done by committee members. Hilary argued that a small amount of work may still merit the housing priority over a student who does nothing - a student who performs a half hour of work to improve residence life contributes to a gain for everyone in the community.
6. Perhaps students should receive priority only within their year of study (to prevent monopolizing of studio apartments by fifth-year students, for example)

7. Perhaps a number of hours that should deem a spot eligible for the priority should be discussed

VI. New Business

Ashley Thrall (Parliamentary Secretary) thanked Darren Pais (MAE) for bringing food for the meeting, and asked for volunteers for the next meeting. Since no one volunteered, she planned to send out an email.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:12pm.

