A meeting of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly was held at 7:00PM on September 21st, 2011 in Houston Hall (Ben Franklin Room).


Executive Committee members in attendance: Joe Friedman, Nina Zhao, Kim Wexler, James Wiley, Mike Hore, Maria Murray, Rachel Delgado, Shaina Oake, Ben Ediger, Jason Cantu, Usama Mahmud & Seattle Wang.

Chair Joe Friedman welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. The general meeting agenda was discussed followed by a brief introduction of the organization. Roll Call was taken by Vice Chair of Operations, Jason Cantu.

Guest Speaker:

Dr. Ajay Nair, Senior Associate Vice Provost – a leading advocate for Penn students – discussed student services at Penn. He may be contacted at ATNair@upenn.edu.

Presentation from the Chair about GAPSA:

The Chair gave a presentation on what it means to be part of GAPSA:

- Time commitment is about 3 hours every other week.
- Representatives reflect university census numbers
- Each meeting we will have a leader from the university speak to the GA
- Discussion of meeting procedures (Handout)
- The executive board has 12 positions, each having its own autonomy
- Each member is part of either the Research or Professional Councils

VC Updates:

**Vice Chair**

The role of the Vice Chair is more of a moderator and to manage GradFest, the spring leadership series, and begin planning for Ivy Summit 2012 (Penn will be hosting).

**VC for Finance**

Being a part of the finance committee means getting to screen who presents to the GA when groups ask for funding. Every student on campus can apply for student funding.
VC for Operations
Office hours will be held on Tuesdays in GAPSA’s Graduate Student Center office. Thumbdrives will be distributed with all pertinent GAPSA information on them. This position manages the GAPSA GA roster; forwards weekly e-mails to the GA, posts the Chair’s agenda, distributes minutes, and plans the GA Retreat (Will occur on October 22nd and is a full day event that will require taking a bus. Expect to be back around 5pm.)

VC for Professional Students
Has been working over the summer to get Steven Dubner for GradFest.

VC for Research Students
Fall travel grants close on September 30th. All summer applications have been reviewed and reimbursements are being processed. The President’s Award is due next Friday. If you know of anyone who is interested in getting 6K for research over the summer, please encourage them to apply. The President’s Award is for students who need help getting to a conference. The Provost’s Award is for students who need extra funding for their research – 6K for a summer research project as a stipend. The Provost’s Award is issued once.

VC for Communications
If you are interested in assisting with maintaining the website or promoting GAPSA, please volunteer.

VC for Equity and Access – Not Present

VC for Social Activities
Plans with the social committee and assists with GradFest. Also coordinates the social calendar with the Vice Chair for Student Programs.

VC for Student Life
This position looks after health, transportation, and general wellbeing of the student body. She has met with CAPS and the head of the Women’s Center over the summer. Please contact Maria with any suggestions or concerns.

VC for Student Programs
Kayaking and a trip to Fogo de Chao were coordinated. This weekend, there is a trip to apple orchards and there will be a screening of PhD Comics during GradFest. Events coordinated by the Vice Chair for Student Programs are on a smaller scale and tend to be much more cultural and academic in nature.

Budget Presentation from Vice Chair for Finances James Wiley:
(Please keep all budget information confidential)
The GA must vote on the budget – this will happen at the next GA meeting; all revenue is stated on the budget. We are going to keep the budget positive this year. We have a lot of $ to work with – we first distribute to the 12 Graduate Schools. Amounts differ because of increased and decreased enrolment in each school. After what we spend on each school, we have expenses we have promised Penn’s Administration. We have internal funding – each VC has $ to spend for expenses related to their positions. The communications increase is due to the fact that we have a new website. The purpose of the discretionary fund is to reward students doing great work. We should look for during presentations: a commitment to academic excellence, organizational capacity, and whether or not graduate students would like to attend their event. Through a
constitutional amendment, last year Joe created an emergency fund. Note: Funding takes into account both full and part time students.

GradFest Presentation from Vice Chair Nina Zhao:  
GradFest was started 5yrs ago with the goal of bringing the graduate community together. Please refer to the website for details regarding all the events. Please e-mail Nina if you’d like to Volunteer. Jason will send out the Facebook group link. It is not too late to join the activities fair. A concern was raised regarding Jewish Holidays, note that we tried to accommodate, but the festival was decided last year.

Discretionary Fund Votes:

Two groups of students came before the General Assembly requesting money from the Discretionary Fund.

Group 1:

Muslim Student Association  
(Mac)

Islam awareness is this week and the purpose of the proposed event is to look at the Muslim population within the community. There will be a screening of a movie that addresses Muslim students living in the US during the September 11th bombings. There will also be a fashion show and an event that will look at the political perspective of a Muslim living in a post 9/11 world.

They are asking for $500 – the remainder of what has not been funded by other sources.

Questions:
1) Is this organization for Grads of Undergrads and how does this play out with the events?  
   The event is mainly speakers that are working with other organizations.
2) Are you a graduate student?  
   No.
3) Have you heard back from other funders?  
   No.
4) How do you plan to promote the event?  
   Locust walk, posters, etc.
5) What is the attendance at most events?  
   50%

Group 2:

My So-Called Enemy  
(Aviva from SP2)

The request is for funding a film: “My So-Called Enemy.” They would like to bring the film director to talk about the film during a hot time to talk about Middle East peace.

The request is for $3,600

Questions
1) Is the film maker fee just for them to come speak to students?
Yes.

2) How do you plan to advertise this?
   There are 32 groups that said they would help promote. There are plans to branch out to both Israeli and Palestinian groups on campus.

3) Do you know how many people your venue holds & do you plan to have one or multiple screenings?
   350. Would love to have multiple screenings. Because of the relationship with the filmmaker, there is already a commitment to commit to Penn.

4) Target date?
   Oct 17th or 19th.

5) Will this be a free event for Grad students?
   Yes.

Discussion following the presentations:

*Muslim Student Association*
RESOLVED: By a majority vote, the Muslim Student Association will receive $500.

*My So-Called Enemy*
RESOLVED: By a majority vote, $1,000 has been approved for funding.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08PM by the chair and was followed by internal committee meetings.

Respectfully submitted,
Jason Cantu, GAPSA VC for Operations