Minutes of the General Assembly Meeting on September 22, 2010

The first regularly scheduled meeting of the GAPSA General Assembly was convened on September 22nd, 2010 at 6:00 PM in the Bodek Lounge of Houston Hall.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:20 pm.

II. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

Present were Maher Zamel, Lee Solomon, Divya Menon, Michael Hore, Henry Friedman, Esther Yu, Maria Murray, David Pietrocola, Joe Friedman, Sven David Udekwu, Garth Baughman, Carla Medalia, Ben DiCicco-Bloom, Nate Brill, Melinda Nelson-Hurst, Ellen Kamei, Alison Baraty, Jeff Li, Kelly Nealis, Rebecca Wetzler, Seattle Wang, Thai Nguyen, Stephanie Pasquesi, David Conklin, Punit Gouthi, Shaina Oake, Mark Francisco, Elizabeth Feldmeier, Benjamin Ediger, Julie Crudele, Sam White, Jessica Langer, Justine Sefcik, Anna Murphy, Emma Stanley, and Mike Baiocchi.

Quorum was declared.

III. Chairman’s Welcome

Mr. Zamel welcomed the 2010-2011 General Assembly (GA), and thanked them for being present. There are many issues that GAPSA is working on presently, including access options to Pottruck gym. If GA members are interested in serving on ad-hoc committees, please e-mail Mr. Zamel or Ms. Murray to get involved. Mr. Zamel asked that GA members notify him in advance if they cannot make meetings.

IV. Vice Chair Introductions and Committee Descriptions

Mr. Joseph Friedman, VC Finance: Mr. Friedman stated that his committee deals with budget oversight and allocation, keeping track of what committees are doing and what they’re spending. The committee is also charged with distributing $450,000 to the 12 student governments (G12). Finally, the committee distributes student group funding, totalling $65,000 for student groups.

Ms. Maria Murray, VC for Student Programs: Student programs tends to run smaller events, most of which do not include alcohol. Examples are events like King of Prussia shuttle, orchards trips, Curtains tickets, Jersey Boy tickets, Cleopatra. Student programs only does events that other students will be interested in, and so Ms. Murray asked GA embers to please join the Student programs committee and plan events and go for free. Mr. Zamel
added that Student programs plans events that explore the cultural side of Philadelphia and the surrounding areas.

Ms. Esther Yu, VC for Social Activities: Ms. Yu explained that Social Activities tends to plan large, fun events such as Moshulu and Halloween party, school happy hours and that she is looking for one person from each school to serve on the Social Activities committee. Responsibilities include working the door, checking IDs, and enforcing official policies regarding alcohol consumption, ticketing, and guests. Committee members are expected to come early to the events, and will need to pay cover for the event. For school happy hours, committee members will be the point person to work with facilities, etc. for organizing the event. Mr. Zamel added that while Social Activities can be a rewarding and fun experience, it is also a lot of work.

Mr. David Pietrocola, VC for Communications: Mr. Pietrocola explained that he is the individual that sends out e-mails, facebook invites, etc. His committee is responsible for public relations, advertising events, spreading information, etc. For his committee looking for people interested in organizing website, working with The Daily Pennsylvanian (student newspaper), writing press releases, and brainstorming clever marketing strategies. Mr. Pietrocola is also looking for a deputy to help maintain website. Ideally one person from each school should be on the Communications committee.

Mr. Lee Solomon, VC for Research Students: Mr. Solomon explained that his committee a bit different in charge of the research council which advocates rights and needs of research/PhD students.

Ms. Suzanne Bratt, Vice Chair: Ms. Bratt stated that the Vice Chair does not have a committee, but that she is looking for volunteers to help with GradFest.

Ms. Divya Menon, VC for International Affairs: Ms. Menon stated that she heads the International Council which is not part of the GA but all international students (even those who are not GA representatives) are welcome to join. The International Council is responsible for making international students feeling more involved, and as some upcoming events. The first is international food night on Friday Sept 24 in Sansom. She is also planning to organize different international films which will happen once every 2 weeks.

Mr. Sven David Udekwu, VC for Professional Students: Mr. Udekwu stated that his position is much like Mr. Solomon’s. The Professional Council is an advocate for academic and social issues dealing with professional students. It also awards travel grants and academic funding for student events.

Ms. Emily Joy Rothchild, VC for Student Life: Ms. Rothchild was not present as she was heading of the GradFest clean-up of the Schuykill River. Ms. Bratt explained that last year (2009-2010) the Student Life committee helped to get the family resource center off the
ground. In advocating for student life the committee deals with student housing, other important issues to all graduate students.

Mr. Henry Friedman, VC for Equity and Access: Mr. Friedman stated that he had no committee, but there is a diversity issues council. Mr. Friedman is very involved in staffing university committees, and asked if there is any issue where GA members or students in general are under represented, to please contact him.

Mr. Michael Hore, VC for Operations: Mr. Hore stated that he had no committee, but is allowed a Deputy. His primary responsibilities are to manage the General Assembly, provide food and refreshments at GA and Executive Board meetings, and plan the Happy Hour that follows the General Assembly meeting.

V. University Committees

Mr. H. Friedman expressed a need for people to represent students to the university, advise the staff about going about business, e.g., dept. of public safety advisor committee. Mr. H. Friedman stated that for practically every aspect of management of the University, there is a committee that needs graduate student representatives. Furthermore, each school has one representative that serves on the University Council (UC), which is the overarching body for the university. Every school must have one representative. The UC meets every two weeks on a Wednesday. Mr. H. Friedman asked that GA members please get back to him as soon as possible regarding sitting on the UC. Finally, he added that most committees meet once or twice a semester, though a select few meet twice a month.

VI. GradFest and Call for Volunteers

Ms. Bratt stated that Fall 2010 was the first time that GradFest has happened in the fall. This year, there is a wide variety of events spanning over a week. For example, today was the Schuylkill River cleanup, Friday is International Food Night, and Saturday is the traditional GradFest clean up. Ms. Bratt asked the GA members to check out website the http://www.gradfest.us, and to take some flyers and tell constituents, especially about Saturday. Get the word out to as many people as possible. She finally asked that GA members volunteer on a sheet that is being passed around during the meeting. Mr. Zamel also added words of encouragement and asked GA members to volunteer.

VII. Budget Discussion and Vote

Mr. J. Friedman explained the proposed budget for fiscal year 2011. He explained that there are twelve graduate schools with 10,000 graduate students. The enrolled students pay student fees that goes to the Board of Trustees, which allocates a portion of this revenue to
GAPSA to distribute. This year, approximately $900,000 in student fee revenue went to GAPSA, $25,000 came from from the Provost, $38,600 from President Amy Gutmann from the Carnegie Academic Leadership Award which needs to be used for a specific purpose. The total of is approximately $1,043,445 – but not all of this amount is for use at GAPSA’s discretion. For example, the money from the Carnegie Academic Leadership Award must go to travel grants for graduate students. Another portion (approx. $495,000) must go to student governments, and this amount has already been distributed on August 1st. The allocation is based on a formula taking into account number of students, full/part time, and professional/research. This leaves approx. $600,000 dollars to distribute in a reasonable way. To this end, $45,000 was located for GradFest, $65,000 for Finance for group funding that is distributed twice a year. The professional budget is less than the research budget because of stipulations in the GAPSA Constitution. To prevent unforeseen situations, Mr. J. Friedman proposed an emergency fund of $40,000. $25,000 was allocated for a GA discretionary fund for the GA to use during the year on any events they would like to organize.

Mr. Zamel moved to limit discussion on the budget to 20 minutes. The motion was seconded, and passed.

Ms. Anna Murphy (SP2) asked why Equity & Access experienced a budget decrease this year while others saw an increase? Mr. H. Friedman, VC of Equity & Access stated that this is because Equity & Access typically is involved in advocacy issues and historically has never spent its entire budget.

Mr. David Conklin (SEAS) asked how the Carnegie Academic Leadership Award money is supposed to be used? Mr. Zamel explained that there will be a committee of 4 professional and 4 research students and that he will chair the committee to award travel grants to graduate students. The Vice Provost wants a $1500-2000 cap on award for international conferences or expensive domestic conferences. Mr. Conklin asked what specifically the money is going to. Mr. Zamel replied for research and presenting research. The student must be presenting to qualify to use the money. Ms. Murray stated the travel grants are for students to raise Penn’s profile in the academic community abroad. Mr. Conklin asked why the money was not allocated under the research students, then. Mr. Zamel replied that the money was given to all students, not PhD or professional students, so the aim is to keep it general for everybody. Mr. Zamel also explained that the GA has a discretionary fund and he encouraged the GA to be active in the coming year sponsoring events that they would like to host.

Mr. Zamel moved to vote on the budget.

Mr. H. Friedman reminded the GA that the vote can be aloud, or by secret ballot.

As a point of information, Mr. Conklin asked if the meeting had quorum. Mr. Hore stated that there was quorum.
The motion to vote on the budget was seconded by Ms. Melinda Nelson-Hurst. The motion passed by a majority (by hands).

**VIII. Breakout Session for Committees**

**IX. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.