Minutes of the General Assembly Meeting on Oct. 21, 2009

The third regularly scheduled meeting of GAPSA General Assembly was convened on October 21st, 2009 at 6:00 PM in the Bodek Lounge in Houston Hall.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30pm.

II. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum


Quorum was declared.

III. Approval of the Minutes from Prior Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes from the General Assembly meeting on 10-07-09 was approved by a majority vote.

IV. Executive Board & Committee Reports

•Chair

Mr. Brown reported that executive board members attended the Ivy Summit (Oct. 9-11). He reported that from his impressions of the other Ivies (and M.I.T., ugh) Penn has a superior level of organization and power. The other schools generally have disjointed government organizations. He also reported that the executive board recently met with President Gutmann and talked about past and current issues in GAPSA. Finally, the executive board also attended a dinner with the Provost and Vice Provost for Education.

•Vice Chair
Mr. Solomon reported that he has continued the fundraising effort for GradFest. Verizon has expressed interest, and he has approached Bon Appetit regarding catering for the event. He also met with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs regarding the possibility of extending their leadership series to graduate and professional students.

**VC Professional Students / Professional Student Council**

Ms. Palomino reported that the social subcommittee has met and is in the process of organizing a professional school bar crawl. The finance subcommittee has also met and is in the process of approving funding student group requests and travel grants. Finally, an etiquette dinner is being planned for professional students.

**VC Research Students / Research Student Council**

Mr. Friedman reported that the Research Council met last week and approved travel grants for about 50 students to present their research at conferences around the world.

**VC International Affairs / International Student Council**

Ms. Jain reported that the IC is in the process of being established. She has met with the director of the Office of International Programs. In the near future she is working towards surveying international students to determine the salient issues in making the transition to living and working abroad. Finally, she is also in the process of putting together a listing of resources for international students, including scholarships and grants, etc.

**VC Equity & Access / Pluralism Student Council**

Ms. Jacobson reported that she needs University Council reps from Dental, Design, and Law. She also reported that she needs two people to serve on Social Responsibility Advisory Committee. Finally, she is also looking for interested parties for the Pluralism Council.

**VC Student Life / Student Life Policy Council**

Ms. Rothchild reported that she met with off-campus services and is working on publicizing the landlord survey. Also met with two Penn parenting groups to discuss the family resource center and also regarding the lack of lactation space on campus. The latter initiative will be spearheaded by women’s center.

**VC Finance / Finance Committee**

Ms. Goss reported that the Finance Committee convened Tuesday night (Oct. 20) to discuss student group funding. Twenty-six groups applied for non-academic event funding. The finance committee approved a total of $22,240 and combined with summer approvals the total amount dispersed to student groups in the new fiscal year is $26,840.
• **VC Social Activities / Student Activities Committee**

Mr. Conkin reported that the Archtoberfest Happy Hour is this Friday (Oct. 23rd) and the Halloween party will be held at Fuzion on Thursday, Oct. 28th at 9pm. Also, tickets for the Black & White Formal went on sale this Tuesday and tickets for a Wine Tasting being held at Supper also went on sale today (Oct. 21st).

• **VC Student Programs / Student Programs Committee**

Mr. Zamel reported that GAPSA has started selling subsidized bridge tickets. He is also in negotiations for cheap (~$3) day passes to the university gym system. He reported that the bus shuttle is going well. Finally, a Thanksgiving dinner is being planned and upcoming events include Fogo de Chao, and City Tavern.

• **VC Communications / Communications Committee**

Ms. Sullivan reported that she is looking for a Deputy. She also reported that there is an error in the weekly email. The Archtoberfest event is on Oct. 23rd, not the 22nd. Also, if anyone is known to not be receiving the weekly email and wants to, please contact Ms. Sullivan.

• **VC Operations**

Mr. Stein reported that the Phillies game would be available for viewing during the post-meeting happy hour.

Mr. Brown made a motion to “woo” for the Phillies. A surprisingly tepid group “woo” ensued. It was unclear whether or not the motion passed.

**V. Unfinished Business**

**A. Constitutional Amendment**

Mr. Brown turned the meeting over to Vice Chair for Research, Mr. Henry Friedman.

Mr. Friedman read the text of the amendment. Previously the amendment had been published via email on Oct. 8th, 2009, as per the constitution.

Mr. Friedman makes a motion to pass the amendment. The motion received a second.

Mr. Lonnberg asked for clarification regarding some of the language in the amendment. He suggested that certain points were redundant and could be eliminated. Mr. Friedman responded that he was simply trying to make the amendment as clear as possible but was not against a change in the language.
Mr. Bard asked for clarification regarding whether article 12 is the section detailing the amendment process and whether the amendments would be in a separate section or contained within article 12. Mr. Friedman responded by saying he did not see the need to have a separate section apart from article twelve.

A motion to vote was made, seconded, and the amendment passed by a 3/4ths majority.

VI. Follow-up Discussion on Reports:

A. Budget (Conducted by VC Finance)

Ms. Ashley Goss, VC for Finance, gave a short talk explaining the budget in the context of previous and future budgets. She explained line items when appropriate on the budget. A discussion followed the presentation.

Ms. Goss gave the floor back to Mr. Brown.

Mr. Hill asked for clarification regarding the projected increase in the budget for next year. Ms. Goss responded that talks are continuing with the administration and that final decision will be made in March. She stressed that until that matter is resolved with certainty she is reluctant to project budgets based on that decision. Mr. Brown said that the UA gets 5.22%, this year GAPSA got 4.21%, noting that the ultimate goal for GAPSA and the administration is to achieve parity between the undergraduate and graduate governments.

Ms. Nelson-Hurst asked what kinds of groups constitute Student Affinity groups? Ms. Goss responded that it’s a diverse set of groups that generally span across multiple schools: BGAPSA, PGWISE, etc. They revolve around cultural, academic, or sports interests. Since they are primarily inter-school groups they cannot always tap into direct school funding sources and thus rely on GAPSA.

VII: New Business

A. Proposed Change to the Budget

Mr. Lonnberg made a motion to take $30,000 from unallocated GAPSA surplus and redistribute to G12 schools.

Mr. Lonnberg spoke in advocacy for the motion. He said the motion would accomplish three goals. First, it leaves the GAPSA internal budget unchanged, allowing GAPSA to serve its core functions and maintain all its obligations. He noted that GAPSA is an important organization doing good work that deserves the level of funding it receives. Second, he added, the motion brings the revenue distribution ratio (G12:GAPSA internal) closer to the historical 60:40 split, and puts the budget in a position to achieve the 60:40 split next year. Lastly, he explained, the
Motion will help out student governments, who are hurting in these troubled economic times.

Mr. Lonnberg indicated that he wanted to speak further on each point. First, he said that last week he didn’t quite understand what the obligations of GAPSA and now thanks to the effort of Ms. Goss and others he understands the importance of protecting the internal. He noted that this is why the motion funds the increase in G12 spending from the unallocated surplus, rather than by reducing the internal budget. He stressed that the motion also leaves in the neighborhood of $28,000 for unplanned expenses in the coming year.

To the second point, he explained his belief that the 60:40 distribution ratio is an important goal for funding the G12. He noted that it would be prohibitively costly to achieve the split in this year’s budget, but that the motion will put GAPSA in a good position to achieve it next year.

Regarding his third goal, Mr. Lonnberg pointed out that this motion would help out school governments. He explained that the Wharton budget has been cut by 25% and that these cuts have directly lead to spending cuts. He then detailed some of the cuts. He mentioned that in discussion with other schools he was made aware that academic group funding in the medical school has also been cut.

Mr. Lonnberg stressed that he does not want to constrain GAPSA, and feels that this motion takes that into account.

Ms. Goss responded that she respectfully acknowledges the motion and appreciates that Mr. Lonnberg understands the goals of the GAPSA budget, but then offered a few clarifications. First, she noted that while 60:40 was the historical split, it isn’t actually a constitutional requirement. She then indicated that it was her belief that given historical data of GAPSA spending, ~$28,000 would not a sufficient surplus to cover unplanned expenses. She added that she appreciates the plight of school governments but feels that depleting the surplus so much is fiscally unsound at this point in the academic year.

Mr. Kumar asked for clarification regarding how GradFest was funded in the past in the context of the current budget. Mr. Brown responded that in the past it had been funded primarily out of the surplus but the goal for the current budget is to fund GradFest as a line item in the GAPSA internal budget.

Mr. Ordway added his support to the position of Ms. Goss. First, he noted that GAPSA is in an enviable position thanks to fiscal stewardship. He then expressed skepticism regarding whether distributing $30,000 to the G12 schools will make meaningful difference in individual school government budgets. He finished by saying that while he feels that the motion has a noble goal, it would be imprudent to deplete the surplus by such a large amount.

Mr. Nagda started by appreciating what Ms. Goss and Mr. Ordway said in favor of protecting the surplus. However, he was interested in discussing how much of GradFest could be funded by fundraising? He suggested that since GradFest is now partially funded as a line item in the internal budget this year, projections for how much of the surplus would need to be used for
GradFest should be lower than previous years. Furthermore, he suggested that fundraising should better this year. He continued by imploring the assembly to give weight to the idea of marginal value of a dollar with respect to the GAPSA internal budget versus G12 school governments. He noted that in the medical school, essential programs are being cut. He finished by saying that by passing this motion, the assembly would be representing its true constituents: the students of their individual school.

Mr. Zamel noted that the G12 schools received a ~10% increase in absolute funding on the whole and asked for clarification as to why the assembly should be attempting to reduce deficits in school governments that are based on decreases in non-GAPSA funding.

Mr. Lonnberg responded by saying that while the GAPSA funding has gone up, it has not increased at the same rate as historically and that this is exacerbating deficits in school governments. Mr. Lonnberg stressed that this motion will not constrain any GAPSA obligations. He added that in crafting this motion he originally was going to ask for the ~$38,000 necessary to get back to the 60:40 split, but decided that the GAPSA internal budget needed more of a surplus. He finished by asking assembly members to remember that they are representing their individual schools and its students as well as the interests of GAPSA.

Mr. Brown responded that while historically the 60:40 split was maintained, the previous and current board decided that given the new obligations of the GAPSA internal budget, as a result of the negotiations with the administration that allowed for the large increase in total revenues, wouldn’t allow it.

Ms. Goss also added that GradFest fundraising last year was unsuccessful, only bringing in $3,000. She noted that its very hard to predict how many donations Mr. Solomon is going to be able to fundraise. She continued that while GradFest is partially covered in budget, its not fully funded so if fundraising is unsuccessful again the event will have to be paid out of the surplus. She also noted that while the plights of the student governments is unfortunate; GAPSA has two councils (research and professional) that can fund academic events. She finished by saying that for academic programs GAPSA is able to help the school governments.

Mr. Kumar asked for clarification regarding the cost of GradFest.

Ms. Goss replied that GradFest cost ~$55,000 last year, with most of the funding coming from the surplus. Mr. brown added that in the budget GradFest was not fully funded to encourage fundraising efforts.

Mr. Bard took the floor and started by apologizing for keeping everyone late last meeting. He promised to keep his time more to the point. He implored the group to think about the value of a dollar, as well as where the dollar is best spent (as that is where the dollar should go). He noted that the surplus currently is in place for potential future spending, whereas there are at least four schools that have current, actual funding needs. He added that many governments are not allowed to run a surplus (i.e. state governments), but that this motion isn’t even as extreme as that, it will leave ~$13,000 unallocated. He acknowledged that the currently unallocated will
eventually be spent somewhere, but asked will it be better spent than if it is distributed to
school governments? He asked assembly members who cannot definitively answer that
question to go back to their respective schools and get the answers they seek. He continued by
making his key point: how can this money be best spent? He noted that he appreciates the goals
and obligations of GAPSA and has no desire to constrain their ability to meet those obligations
and that this motion will not change this.

Mr. Hill also spoke in favor of the motion. He noted that in the constitution, it says that GAPSA
will sponsor academic and cultural events for students. He contrasted the many students who
are social and want to attend the larger GAPSA events with those students who are off-put by
such intense settings. He added that the best way to reach out to students who are not engaged
by larger GAPSA events is through smaller school-centric groups. He continued by saying that
school governments are better at engaging these kinds of students. Mr. Hill added that this
motion will help future negotiations for funding increases by showing that GAPSA is wisely
stewarding its current funding. He finished by saying it is important to get back to 60:40 ratio to
help individual students who are better engaged by school governments.

Mr. Henry Friedman said that great points are being made but offered some clarifications. While
dancing around the specifics, he claimed that the under-spending last year was a function of a
specific unnamed person in a leadership position missing approximately 60% of the meetings.
He argued that while he did not find the argument offensive, it shouldn’t be taken as a
convincing argument of GAPSA’s inefficiency. He also suggested that it would only take a few
well-crafted beverages before he would be willing to divulge the specifics of the situation to
interested parties. He also reiterated that in the past GradFest was usually partially funded early
in the academic year with the understanding that surplus would be available later if fundraising
was unsuccessful.

Motion to call the question was made, seconded, and passed by a majority (just clouture).

The motion to disburse $30,00 of current unallocated surplus to the G12 schools failed to
achieve the 3/4ths majority necessary to pass.

**B. Consideration of Focus Issues for the Assembly**

Mr. Brown implored the group to bring up any issues that affect their constituents because
there is room for more issues on the GAPSA agenda.

**VIII: Announcements**

None

**IX: Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm.