Minutes of the General Assembly Meeting on Jan. 27, 2010

The seventh regularly scheduled meeting of GAPSA General Assembly was convened on January 27th, 2010 at 6:00 PM in the Bodek Lounge in Houston Hall.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 pm.

II. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

Present were: Corbett Brown, Lee Solomon, Ashley Goss, David Stein, Michelle Jacobson, Jade Palomino, Henry Friedman, David Conklin, Emily Joy Rothchild, Maher Zamel, Melinda Nelson-Hurst, Suzanne Bratt, Gerardo Benitez, Claudia Schlessman, Carla Medalia, Nate Brill, Scott Ordway, Benjamin Dicicco-Bloom, Ellen Kamei, Cara Bumgardner, Markus Hill, Lisa Jacobson, Alexandria Mathieu, Kimberly Krasnow, Erica Silbiger, David Pietrocola, Maria Murray, Swathi Madaiah, Ria Varghese, Sven David Udewku, Joe Friedman, Fernando P. Midence Mantilla, Jacqueline Simonet, Dustin Shilling, Tammer Farid, Will Cho, Danish Nagda, Sarah Abdulla, Beth Froh, Margaret Yoho, Tom Byrne, Ada Mi-Sedhi, Mike Baiocchi, David Bard, Sodany Sor.

Quorum was declared.

III. Approval of the Minutes from Prior Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes from the General Assembly meeting on 12-02-09 was approved by a majority vote.

IV. Executive Board & Committee Reports

• Chair

Mr. Corbett Brown reported that the executive board had a meeting with VP Binns. In the meeting, it was revealed that the increase of funding (as a percentage of the student fee) was secured, though the actual percentage increase will not be known until mid-way through the semester. Mr. Brown also reported that the focus issues brought by the GA last semester were delegated to the relevant standing committees and directed to work with other committees already in place in the university.

• Vice Chair

Mr. Solomon reported that the leadership series has reached a point in the planning stage where he can say with certainty that it will occur. Advertising will commence once dates and
times are finalized. He also reported that the campus climate survey is about begin the pilot phase. Finally, GradFest is continuing to be planned, is on budget, and is going well.

• VC Professional Students / Professional Student Council

Ms. Palomino reported said that finance committee has streamlined the grant process by making it electronic. She also reported that her committee has chosen a date for the wine walk (3/25), and is currently in the process of finalizing the details.

• VC Research Students / Research Student Council

Mr. Friedman reported on some events that received Research Council funding that are coming up: a German/History event, and a Biochemistry event. He encouraged interested members to get more information. He also reported that his committee was moving forward with summer funding for a community-based research project.

• VC International Affairs / International Student Council

There was no report from the VC International Affairs or International Student Council.

• VC Equity & Access / Pluralism Student Council

Ms. Jacobson reported that a special election to elect a new Vice Chair for International Affairs would be held at the next GA meeting. She also reported that she has met with the faculty diversity committee to discuss relevant issues.

• VC Student Life / Student Life Policy Council

Ms. Rothchild reported that the Family Resource Center opened recently and that she was encouraged by the early utilization of the space. She also reported that the facility obtained a breast pump and storage unit. She also publicized a S.A.F.E. training course and it sold out quickly, so she is working to advertise more events. She also reported that her committee is launching a service initiative, and working with civic house to hold an open house in mid-February for students looking to find out about service opportunities. Finally, she reported that her committee is looking into Service Initiative/Social Activities synergy opportunities.

• VC Finance / Finance Committee

Ms. Goss distributed a mid-year budget summary to update the GA on the funds that have been spent so far by GAPSA. She also reported that the number of student groups requesting funding this semester increased to 34 requests, asking for over $10,000 more than last semester.

• VC Social Activities / Student Activities Committee

Mr. Conkin reported that the semester started with bang with the SASgov happy hour at the
Penn Museum that saw ~600 people attend. He specifically wanted to give Leslie Warden credit for doing much of the hard work to get the event planned. He also reported that the Jose Garces Tequila Pairing Dinner at Distrito was a big success. Finally, he added that next week is the Dental School Stoplight happy hour.

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

Mr. Zamel reported the sold out Body Worlds Exhibit is coming up soon, as is the equally sold-out dinner at the Hyatt. He mentioned that a speed dating event will be held towards end of February so interested parties should keep an eye out for that. He also reported that movie ticket sales and the King of Prussia bussing schedule has resumed. He added that he is hoping to secure lower ticket prices in light of recent violent events at the theater. The committee is also looking into Lion King tickets.

• **VC Communications / Communications Committee**

Ms. Sullivan reported that she has started a section on the GAPSA webpage for featuring student groups. Any GA member who knows of a qualified group should contact her.

• **VC for Operations**

Mr. Stein reminded the GA that the procedure for designating a proxy includes emailing him 24h before the meeting.

**V. Follow-up Questions on Reports**

There were no questions.

**VI. Budget Proposals**

1. **Finance Committee**: Ms. Goss explained that her finance committee is in charge of funding affinity student groups. The committee funds groups for both operating expenses and larger non-academic event funding. This is supplementary funding and the committee expects groups to find complimentary sources of revenue. At the current volume of requests, the committee is unable to fund most groups to the committee-imposed maximum of $2500. Preference in funding is given to cross-campus groups. Furthermore, half of the leadership of a requesting affinity group should be graduate or professional students and the group must have open membership as well as being registered through OSL. She further reported that there are two funding cycles (fall and spring). Submission for these cycles is electronic and asks for membership overview and budget breakdown, as well as inquiring about unused GAPSA funds from previous funding requests to ensure that groups are using the money. For the summer and fall funding cycle, 29 groups requested funds totalling $51,703.50. The finance committee allocated $27,940. In the spring semester there was an increase to 34 requests,
requesting $64,780. However, the committee only has $18,900 left to allocate. Ms. Goss then distributed a list of groups who will receive funds if finance committee’s $5000 budget request is approved. There were no questions of clarification. A motion to approve a $5000 increase in the finance committee’s budget. Ms. Bratt asked if there was an inter-school requirement before the money is dispersed. Ms. Goss replied that in the past GAPSA had only asked that the groups complied and hope but that starting this year they were compiling statistics to verify these claims. Mr. Bard asked for clarification on the nature of the substance of the motion. Ms. Goss explained that the motion was for a $5000 increase in the finance committee budget for this year. Mr. Nagda asked where this desired increase in funding would be taken from. Ms. Goss replied that the finance committee looked at all the requests and these were the groups they wanted to fund but did not have the funds for allocation in their original budget. Mr. Bard asked for clarification on where the newly allocated money was going to be taken from in the budget. Ms. Goss explained that the money would come from the discretionary fund. The motion was passed.

2. Social Activities Committee: Mr. Conklin explained that his committee is in charge of the large scale social events. Also in charge of school happy hours and smaller bar happy hours. The philosophy is under his administration is to keep up traditional events as well as provide a diverse event calendar with smaller (~100) person events. He further explained that this included events like tequila and wine pairings, etc. He is also committed to providing lowest event cost to students. As an overview of his spending in the last semester he explained that over the summer and fall the social activities committee held 28 events: highlights include Strikes Happy Hour (~550 attending), Moshulu (~1200 attending), School of Design’s ARCHtoberfest (~400), Halloween party (~650), Black & White Formal (~300), a series of late night Distrito happy hours (250-400 each), and the SASgov happy hour at the Penn Museum (~600). The dinner at Lacroix sold out in a couple hours, the Jose Garces dinner at Distrito sold out in minutes so his events are in high demand. He attributes the great turnout to working very closely with Ms. Sullivan to advertise events in a more effective manner. This initiative is doing quite well, especially over Facebook leading to the huge increases in turnout seen at events. For the spring semester the committee has the budget necessary to run 11 events, totaling $20,295.63. The focus for this semester is working with school governments to hold joint happy hours. He is making a request for an additional $14,000 for two reasons. First, the increased attendance at his previous events has made them more expensive and wants the ability to supplement budgets for already planned events to reduce costs per students for those events that have a cost and provide a better experience for those events that are already free. The floor was opened for questions. Mr. Nagda asked if the committee has held more events than last year? Mr. Conklin said that his predecessor (Ms. Kim) organized more events, his committee is doing less but individual events have larger budgets and higher attendance. Mr. Hill interjected with advertisement for the Dental School Stoplight happy hour and made a plea for GA members to help run the event since the level of attendance is high and the dental school can always use more help. Mr. Conklin added that his philosophy is that the school happy hours should be free for everyone. Mr. Midence asked whether the
$14,000 was for new events or for supplement events? Mr. Conklin said that ~$9500 is for supplementing the budgets of already planned events, with the balance being used to plan new events. For instance, Mr. Conklin would like to add $700-$1000 to the budget of stoplight party. Mr. Nagda asked where the money would come from? Mr. Conklin said that he was under the impression that it was to come from the discretionary fund but since that would not cover it the money will now come from the unallocated surplus. Ms. Murray wondered if $14,000 would be enough considering the current strain on resources at events? Mr. Conklin replied that he would prefer to have a budget he was forced to stick with, but if necessary he could come back. Mr. Nagda explained that it was his understanding that the unallocated surplus was to be used for cost overruns by GradFest and wondered what had changed? Mr. Solomon said that at the moment he has no plans to come to GA for more money for GradFest this year so the surplus is free to be allocated to other uses. Mr. Bard asked about the numbers for GradFest, what was the amount that they thought was going to need? Mr. Solomon explained that VP Wells has given more than expected and other funding, so with that included the original $20,000 allotted to GradFest should cover costs. Mr. Nagda urged GA to remember that while this is all well and good, we should think about where that surplus should go (what about G12?). Mr. Bard offered up a couple thoughts: remember that this $14,000 links to what the GA does with the rest of the unallocated surplus. He continued to congratulate Mr. Conklin and Ms. Goss, as in his estimation they have done a great job and the attendance at events is a testament to that. But he urged the GA to think about the best use for the unallocated surplus? He suggested that the discussion be had in a more holistic manner, to allocate all of the surplus at once instead of doing it piecemeal in order of when requests come in. He argued that it was best to discuss a budget when all possible information is known and all the pieces can be adjusted in order to be as transparent as possible. He added that he understands the GA has less time to consider these issues but suggested that is why its so important to be as efficient and transparent in the process as possible. Mr. Farid remarked for this fiscal year GradFest funding was up in the air, so it was hard to allocate funds effectively ahead of time and therefore there is a need for some planned surplus to give flexibility. Mr. Hill wondered if there was anyone dissenting against the motion? Since there wasn’t, the motion was brought to a vote and passed by a majority.

VII: New Business

Mr. Brown thanked the group for the vigorous discussion. He then turned over the floor to Ms. Sullivan, who debuted the new GAPSA t-shirts. They were passed out after the meeting. Mr. Bard asked the GA for feedback about a slogan for marketing GAPSA to Wharton: what the f*%K is GAPSA? He added that he looked forward to a discussion.

VIII: Announcements

Mr. Brown announced that a special election to fill the Vice Chair for International Affairs position vacated by Ms. Jain would be held at the next General Assembly meeting. Ms. Silbiger
advertised for Relay for Life, mentioned that she is captain of a GSE graduate student team who is looking for more participants. She mentioned that she was open to merging with another team if necessary.

**IX: Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm.