GAPSA General Assembly Meeting
9.12.07
Logan Hall – Terrace Room

Exec Board present: all

Exec Board Introductions

Dan: Chair
Victor: VC for Finance
Wenny: VC for Student Programs
Anne: VC for International Affairs
Christa: VC for Pluralism
Kara: VC for Student Life
Neal: VC for Professional Students
Alina: VC for Communications
Andrew: VC for Research Students
Henna: VC for Operations
Jessica: VC for Social Activities

Intro to GAPSA

Dan: We’re here as the government to support all the schools here at Penn. Some of the issues we’ve taken up in the past are security, housing, student health. We’re here to represent the students that have these issues.

History of GAPSA

Wenny: I spent this morning in the University Archives and found there is a little historian in me.

In 1952, The Graduate Students Association (GSA) was organized, receiving a charter from the University and starting a series of academic and social activities. In 1956-57, this graduate student government began supporting departmental clubs and societies from across the University as long as they sent representatives to the body and submitted a budget. At the time, these representatives elected a President, a Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

In the late 1960s to early 1970s, the group became more well-organized and represented departmental groups, mostly in the arts and sciences, but also included engineering and design. In 1968, there are records that the source of GSA funding from the University was very confusing because it involved some mysterious calculations, and it seemed that GSA was operating with $6 per full-time student and a questionable amount from part-time students. And at that time, the group represented 27 departments and clubs. The GSA first had an office in the basement of Bennett Hall and then moved into a space in Houston Hall. They dealt with concerns and issues such as safety and career placement. They also wanted more daycare options for their grad
students. In 1969, the University Council, the deliberative and widely representative forum that oversees all the activities on campus, designated that students should be placed on University-wide councils, and GSA helped to appoint these students. In 1974, GSA was noted in the Daily Pennsylvanian as GSAC (Graduate Student Association Council).

In 1977, the Graduate/Professional Alliance (GPA) was formed with 2 main goals: to publish a bimonthly newsletter to publicize the activities of students in the different schools and to look into their common issues. The GPA at that time consisted mostly of professional students.

In 1979, GAPSA was started, and it represented the 12 schools of Penn, including GSAC, which represented the research, masters and doctoral students. Randall Marks, a Penn law student was a co-founder and the first chair of the organization. There were 3 aims of GAPSA at that time: to act as a voice to express the concerns of graduate students and advocate on their behalf; to coordinate activities happening throughout Penn; and to nominate students to sit on University committees. These are goals that present-day GAPSA also has.

In those days, GAPSA met at least once per semester. In the first meeting on September 24, 1979, GAPSA requested space for a graduate student lounge in Houston Hall. Almost 20 years later, we finally got a Graduate Student Center, which we will hear about from Anita later this evening. GAPSA, in its first meeting, also established a task force to study health school tuitions. Apparently, the financial burden of medical and dental school in those days was much harder to bear than that of undergraduate education.

Early on, GAPSA focused on the issue of limited on-campus housing, in particular when a graduate student from Annenberg was murdered off-campus. GAPSA worked on increasing communication between the schools and worked alongside the Undergraduate Assembly (UA) to increase minority recruitment. In its first two years, GAPSA drafted a constitution, and a major hurdle was to appease all sides, in particular was the concern of GSAC about adequate representation. GSAC’s main concern at the time was the need for more funding for teaching fellowships, because departmental budgets were being cut.

I think that was the beginning of an interesting relationship between GAPSA and GSAC over the last 20 years. Sometimes they worked together and sometimes they didn’t. In the last few years, GAPSA was known to represent all graduate and professional students, advocating on their behalf on common issues and doing really fun things, like huge parties and happy hours. GSAC, on the other hand, was the governing organization including representatives from all research departments, mostly from School of Arts and Sciences, but also from School of Medicine and School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. Funding sources and representation was confusing as ever, especially when the School of Arts and Sciences started adding professional programs like the Fels Institute of Government. GSAC was serving a dual role as the graduate student government of the School of Arts and Sciences as well as representing all research students. Executive board elections for both GAPSA and GSAC seemed to pull on the same talented and dedicated people. Fast forward to 2006-2007, and we underwent a massive reorganization of student government at Penn.

Last year, GAPSA and GSAC led by Lee Shaker and Cassondra Giombetti came together to discuss how student government at Penn could be better structured and better organized and run more efficiently, with more accountability and transparency. In the end, it was decided that only one umbrella student government was needed to achieve those goals. Several changes were made to accomplish this; GSAC was dissolved and a new student government for School of Arts and Sciences was formed, now under the leadership of Leslie Warden. GAPSA was to assume the responsibility of advocating on behalf of all research students, and this was
manifested in the formation of our current Research Council, now headed by Andrew Rennekamp. GAPSA now has representation from all 12 schools that is more fair and based mostly on population sizes. We also have policy positions on the board, including Vice Chairs for Pluralism and International Students, to better serve our constituents. And most of all, Lee and Cassondra led a group of students from both GAPSA and GSAC to work with the University administration to make the funding equation more transparent, with student fees going partly to the individual school governments and partly to GAPSA.

A new constitution expressed these changes, and we are this year privileged to undertake the responsibility of seeing that these changes make GAPSA a better student government. We will continue the duties and traditions that GAPSA has had in the past, but do so with a richer and more unified voice now that we have both research and professional students fully under our wing.

Dan: We’ve actually merged two governments and constitutions together. It’s gone under enormous growth and there are gonna be kinks, and it will be a learning process for all of us.

Icebreaker  (sorry I wasn’t able to hear what everyone said, but left this in here for entertainment purposes)
Jessica: Lost on a Deserted Island – take a postcard and write one thing you cannot live without on a deserted island.

Neal – Rubrik’s cube b/c I like showing off I’m mathematical, even though I’m not.

Roger - SAS – language for making puns, I’d go crazy if there was no raw material for making puns

Lucas – internet

Paige – vet, chocolate

Carey – vet, Katie Ferrell

Katie – vet, horse

Kathleen - water

Nikki – my phone

Prem – someone of the opposite sex

Chris – GSE, sunscreen

Sherrill ??? Wharton

Kara – good long book

Christa – fishing line

Tim - SAS – a cast iron skillet
Shawnika – writing set  
Lok – speakers/music  
Anne – laptop and wifi – to communicate with GAPSA everyday  
Francis – portable playstation/entertainment  
?? swedish fish  
Jackie – med – book, cuz I’d be bored  
Wenny – pair of eyeglasses  
Sarah – ipod  
Victor – wallet, I don’t know why, I’m just addicted to my wallet  
Dan – papa john’s pizza  
Jessica – knife  
Henna – a big fat can of RAID  
Sarah – floss, cuz if I got all that fish stuck in my teeth I’d go crazy  
Amy – sas – wine  
Andrew – podcast  
David - med - toothbrush  
Jiyeon – wine  
Chris – med – bottle of whiskey  
Ben – Wharton – ipod  
SEAS – sunblock, I would burn to a crisp and die before i do anything  
Alina – coffee  
Greg – palm tree  
David – dictionary to educate myself if I got really bored  
Robin – SP2 – cell phone  
Shawn? – Wharton – laptop and facebook
Amy – Wharton – ipod with life long lasting battery

Jamie – engineering – towel for shade, pillow, warm at night, all purpose covering

Larry – I’d bring the massive chip on my shoulder

Jennifer – Wharton – life jacket b/c I don’t know how to swim

Lauren – hammock to help pass the time

Ishan - Wharton- corona

Graduate Student Center 101

Anita Mastroieni: I normally give a powerpoint when I normally do this, but the technology in this room wasn’t cooperating, so I printed out my slides so we’re gonna do it old school. I’m the director at GSC, and also a grad student at Penn. I’m on dissertation status and have been for quite a long time. I am defending my proposal next week. I’ve been with the organization since 2001. The Grad Center’s history precedes prior to that b/c it was GSAC and GAPSA that put together a proposal for the grad center. I was hired in August 2001 to have the center ready by September 2001, and we’ve been operating ever since. I think it’s important to give credit to GAPSA for giving huge financial commitment to the grad center to help get it off the ground. In 2002, you gave us $40,000. 03 – $30,000; 04 – $20,000. So that’s the history. GAPSA was instrumental in sitting on search committee to fill my position. GAPSA has 2 seats on GSC Advisory Board. This year we’re going to make it 3. VC for Pluralism is in charge of filling all the positions for the advisory board. GAPSA advertises Grad Center programs. Center provides free office space and meeting space to GAPSA. 550 tickets were sold last year for GAPSA events. We also cosponsored events with GAPSA – providing staffing for events, providing advice, etc.

We also collaborated on advocacy issues. The Ivy Grad Leaders Summit is something we collaborate together on as well. Other events = the personal finance series, GradFest, Grad Student Day at the Zoo.

Dan: GSC is located on 3615 Locust Walk.

Anita: The declining support… I don’t know if GAPSA saw what the administration was putting up and said we need more. I’m not really sure. I went back to the Provost and said I can’t do $10,000 less, so to their credit, they stepped up. That’s where my money comes from – the Provost. I wouldn’t advocate that GAPSA put 40K on the table, b/c they would just take it back. In the past GAPSA paid for part of the terrace and all of the furniture, which didn’t affect what I was getting from the Provost.

So, I’ll tell you a little more about the GSC. Our mission is to build community among grad students and meet the special needs of grad students. You’re different from undergrads and if you have to compete with them, you’re gonna lose. We worry about different things with you, but it’s not really life or death. When they have to make a choice, they’re going to go with the life and death stuff – unsafe sex, drinking issues.

Staffing: Anita = director, DeAnna = Assistant Director
We’re really excited we get to hire an administrative assistant this year. Hopefully we’ll have one by October.
Budget: it’s roughly in the $300-350 range. 95% of that comes from the Provost. $3100 from GAPSA last year – 2500 went to mentoring program and $600 for personal finance series; GSAC gave us $15000 last year, and I understand it was built into the budget so that we’ll continue to get that. The mentoring program was created unbeknownst to us by both organizations GSAC and GAPSA while we were, and once we talked, we decided to join forces. When we come to GAPSA with facilities project, it’s a onetime thing. Last year we didn’t go to GAPSA with any facilities request b/c we needed a break. We had just installed a new elevator.

Of our operating budget, which is a portion of the full budget, pull out salaries and benefits, what you have left is the operating budget. 27% = fellows salaries; services = 20% (free coffee and tea for 11,000 people); facilities = 18%; programs = 12%; NSO = 8%; communication = 6% (wireless system, PennNet, telephones); management = 10% (Advisory board lunch, office supplies, etc.)

Question: about the fellows…who are they?

Anita: we have 10 fellows. Meredith – held a variety of positions at the GSC; Sarah – was mentoring, is now our navigating grant fellow; Charles Davis - new mentoring fellow; we have a lot of new people this year….Linda – navigating the dissertation; Chris – outreach (assistantships); Jillian – NSO; Josh – web fellow; we’re missing our ARCO fellow, we’re ready to make an offer to a masters program at SP2; we like PhD students b/c they hang around more. But we’ve committed at least 2 spots to master’s students. MBA students cannot work for us b/c the workload is so great. Same with dental and vet. We have had law students in the past but not lately. SP2s usually have a practicum, but we found one that doesn’t have requirement. We’ll make a point to have those students in those programs on the advisory board.

So what did we accomplish with our money? We have a door counter so we know how many come into the grad center. 388 programs were organized last year. For 111 programs we registered 5,700 students. I don’t know who’s hanging out in the building, it may be the same 500 people every day but I don’t think so b/c I see new faces. Last year we also took 518 reservations, 64 of them being GAPSA. And we had 275,000 visits to website.

We rolled out a Green Initiative where we stopped providing free cups. We ran some numbers and we were going through 100,000 cups a year. So we decided to stop providing free cups and continue providing free coffee, and it was painful for about a month but now everyone’s used to it. I think that was a really good move for us and we’re proud about that.

Ben: I have a feeling of the big loss of not having cups anymore was b/c it was much harder to get coffee. It would be easier if there was a place for us to wash out mugs.

Anita: Yeah, we could do that but it would be expensive. Right now you would do that in the bathroom. I’ve had some students ask me if there’s a place for them to keep their mugs. It’s just a space and a money thing.

Last year we did for the first time Sex Camp, which was a lot of fun for people who went. They do this for undergrads and they do a lot of data collection at the Office of Health Education, and they found last year that the incidence of STDs went up mainly for our grad students. so we said let’s roll out sex camp for grad students. and doing it in conjunction with happy hour, we knew would get more people to come. We do it on Valentine’s Day, if you wanna mark your calendars now. Hopefully when we get the stats this year, the infection stats would have gone down. We also show Cricket World Cup, and this is really popular among our international
students. GradFest, of course you know about. Last year was our 5th year reunion. So that’s some of the big things we did last year.

Looking ahead to this year: we hope to roll out the new website. We’ve added an administrative assistant. This year the university has declared it the Year of Food. The Freshmen’s reading project this year is The Omnivore’s Dilemma. The book is about the food industry in the US. So we decided why should freshmen have all the fun, so we picked up the theme at the GSC. We’re going to have a discussion with Professor Rosen. In October, we’re doing a project with the library which was given 10,000 cookbooks by Chef Blanc. Next semester, we’ve got a really neat professor in archaeology who discovered 2 kinds of ancient beer in Chinese and Egyptian vessels. This restaurant was able to recreate the beers so I’m buying them slowly b/c they’re so expensive. Office of International Programs selected new students from a variety of countries and from the US to do an Intercultural Leadership Program. We’re also reminding the university the emphasis on student with dependents this year. And then the fund raising/campaign is kicking off. We haven’t done one in about 10 years, so it’s a big deal. We’re kicking it off next month….some relate to PhD stipends and grad/professional student life. So we’re gonna be pretty active in those initiatives. I used to work in development and alumni relations at penn before this job so I’m in a pretty good position.

Ben: I’m not sure maybe this isn’t well defined, but there’s not a great understanding of the purpose of the lounge area of the GSC. There’s some confusion about whether it’s study space or a lounge space?

Anita: There are people that definitely want it to be a study space. It is not. It’s an activities center. There are 15 libraries on campus, there is 1 activities center for grad students. so the quiet front and the loud front would get annoyed with each other. We switched around so that half the tables and half the couches are in both spaces. We have dedicated the 3rd floor for quiet study space. We feel very strongly that it is not a quiet study space.

Neal: Could I schedule a meeting in the 2nd floor room?

Anita: Yes. We have 20 meeting spaces. The rooms are set up such that there are appropriate sized rooms for different sized groups. All of our spaces are free as long as you are a grad student and it’s during our normal hours. There’s a simple online form you have to fill out. About 900 reservations are made a year, so there are students who know about it, but there are plenty of students who don’t. We even book the terrace for people who want to have an outdoor event.

We have some navigating programs coming up. So take a couple of flyers, hang them up in your departments.

Dan: Anita is a valuable resource. She knows how to do almost everything.

Anita: I’ve been at Penn for about 15 years now, so I know where all the bodies are buried.

Dan: so as part of the GA, it’s your job to get the word out about the resources.

Internal Committees

Dan: we’re gonna have our respective chairs stand up…we’re gonna do a round robin session.

Administrative
University Council – Dan: it’s meeting relatively soon, so we need appointments soon. It’s the overarching organization that overlooks everything. Sometimes you may get no response for a while, and then BAM, something gets done. Some of the key topics – security/safety, mental health, public health, eastward expansion, pennconnect projection, academic affairs. It is very important that we have 12 members there from the GA. 3 positions are filled by the exec board. Commitment is once a month, 4-6pm, always a Wednesday. What we need ASAP…can someone nominate someone for the UC? If you can just talk amongst your student governments and nominate people.

Andrew: Does the 1 Annenberg student rep have to be on the UC?

Dan: we have a strong preference that we have that person go to the UC, but if it’s not possible, then we understand there will be exceptions to that rule.

Lucas: do you know if the meetings will be the same as the GAPSA meetings?

Andrew: I think it usually is, but not necessarily.

Christa: I think it’s the 3rd Wed. of the month

Dan: Due date to get your person is by Monday.

Wenny: usually the December meeting is cancelled due to the holiday, if there’s no huge emergency.

Dan: we need 1 from every school. As of now we don’t have any candidates. If your school has one from last year, and want to keep that person, you can.

Christa: email to gapsa.vcpluralism@gmail.com

Dan: UC is the eyes and ears of the University.

Policy council – Christa: my job is to appoint people to policy councils that are separate from the University committees. We got about 250 applicants, we interviewed over 100 of them. We met earlier this week to make the appointment decisions, and we’ll be letting them know. The applicants are amazingly qualified for committees that are wide in range of interests.

Dan: Christa’s being humble. It was a huge initiative to interview 250 people, and typically they were about 30 mins.-1 hour long.

Student rep forms – Henna: please return the certification form to me by next meeting, which will be on the 26th.

Budget – Victor: we were going to present our budget today. We have to go through due process next meeting.

Andrew: The funds for each school are funds that students are supposed to be spending, not the administration.

Katie: The vet school doesn’t have a government, so can we talk about how we’re going to do that?
Dan: the money that is leftover at the end of the year is yours.

Andrew: the school should have an account that money can carry over in.

8:26pm Break up into Professional and Council Meetings

Meeting adjourned 9pm