Evaluation Survey Results

Alina: What would you like to accomplish for the rest of the year?
   - Use less paper
   - Need to be more aggressive about goals, instead of just talking about them. I’d love to know what you mean by that. Please come and talk to us if there’s something specific you’d like to do.
   - We should let the administration know in a more formal way to improve grad housing. What do you mean? We’ve been saying to them, what about grad housing in the expansion?
   - Develop a plan for student center outreach in west philly. We have a project for you. So talk to Christa.

What and how can we improve?
   - Inconsistency of attendance. It makes it very hard as a body to accomplish things if people aren’t here. And as you saw, not everyone is here tonight. So if you know people aren’t here, please tell them to come.
   - Please pay attention to things that are supposed to be confidential.
     - More networking events. Find Neal or Dan and talk to them about doing more things.
     - Speaker should be encouraged to stay within time frame.
     - More feedback from GA and more discussion/interaction
     - Please don’t ever feel that you can’t talk to us about anything
     - Consistent meeting place – if you know of a place that can hold 60+ people, please let us know. We would love to have a consistent place to meet too.
     - We should encourage more social interaction at Pod.

Someone seems to be confused about what we did and didn’t do. Just to clarify, We didn’t spend any money on the NY Times. We’re not going to have any more discussion on the subject. If there’s something I missed, please let us know. And someone also wrote, I have to say this, ‘we should actually accomplish something. Octobus does not count.’

Lokman: is this going to be a recurring event?
Vicky: we should have this at least after mid-semester.

Lucas: what can we do that makes the housing issue more formal?

Dan: I was actually going to talk about it. We are actively doing a lot of things on the housing issue. We’ve met with Craig C., Doug Berger, Ron Daniels, and Ed Datz. They actively hear us on the housing issue. I’m talking about it with a budget committee tomorrow. How do we get affordable grad housing? If we had a choice b/w more on campus grad housing like Sansom or more affordable off-campus housing, which one
would you prefer? Sansom is $1200 for a 1-bedroom. Off-campus rate is always going to be market rate. On-campus usually includes utilities.

Roger: why can’t the university generate below-market rates?

Anne: I had a couple of meetings with these people on behalf of international students. Sansom will always be above market, b/c Sansom is the only dorm on campus they make money with. They lose money on all undergrad dorms.

Dan: off campus preference. [3 people]

Leslie: it always comes down to money. If they’re making money off of Sansom, then they’re always going to try and make money off of that sad and sorry building.

Dan: I don’t think we’re going to win the battle about below market housing. That’s a battle that’s been fought many times. Transferring grad housing into undergrad housing.

Vicky: why is it that they don’t make money off the undergrads? They’re more likely to stay on campus.

Lokman: is it gonna make a difference in terms of capacity?

Dan: mayer hall didn’t drop in rent.

Sansom is above market but it sells out every year.

Chris: I think most international students would prefer to live on campus. And that’s probably where the demand is. I would rather be at market otherwise many people would not take advantage of it.

Lindsay: I think most people I know would def. be for more off-campus housing.

Roger: for Ph.D students we would much prefer something that’s subsidized.

Anne: grad housing is in such a bad state that it’s not about this little thing or this little thing. It’s about asking to get Sansom into a decent state and a non-health hazard. And to actively try and find housing off-campus. They should at least help us find housing.

Dan: I’m going to table this right now.

International Council Member Appointment Approval

Anne: we appointed the members last semester, one member left b/c workload was too much. I would like to appoint Marsha Hay. She’s already an adjunct member of the council, very dedicated. I would like to have her approved.

Alejandro: motion to approve
Chris: 2\textsuperscript{nd}.

**Exec Reports**

Henna: thank you to those who have arranged their townhall meetings. Please figure out when you will be having them. We would like to have them done before exec board elections so that people will have more info about GAPSA. So please email me the dates!

Kara: AETNA will be here in March to talk about the insurance. SHIAC traditionally has been a blackbox.

Christa: I met with the Provost, and we talked about underrepresented students on campus.

Neal: [left]

Jessica: next social event – helium comedy club next Thursday. $15 (estimated value = $30). We’ll be doing a happy hour with dental.

Wenny: feb. 24 yello bar brunch – 2 courses and a cocktail for $15. Restaurant school dinner – sold out. GAPSA speed dating – almost sold out. April 6 – dodgeball tournament. Start thinking about getting your friends together. We’ll be doing a dinner at Haru. Discounted tickets to the Frida Kahlo Museum of Art. Trip to 6 Flags. GradFest is on May 3 – picnic and carnival, boat cruise at night, each of the 12 schools are invited to funshops, we’ll also have lots of vendors. My committee has been working hard on fundraising. We have $13000. If you know of anyone who wants to get their organization name out to 11,000 grad students, please let me know. We are also inviting 7000 Penn grad and professional student alumni, except for dental, b/c they did not want us to talk to their alumni.

Alina: we want to make GAPSA webpage more relevant for international students. I’ll finally be working with off-campus housing.

Victor: the finance committee has been working seriously. An audit is going on right now and hopefully we’ll be finished with that pretty soon. We are trying to promote event funding. thank you to those of you who made presentations at townhall meetings.

Andrew: the new minimum stipend levels were raised within the past week and this is a direct result of GAPSA’s advocacy work. Gone up to $19200, SAS has gone up to $21000 over a 10 month period. Interdisciplinary award with Provost – applications due feb. 29. Get it in if you have one, if you know people who want to apply. Research student travel grants, the deadline passed, and we have 99 applicants. We usually have around 70ish.

Big hand to Andrew and Dan for all their work on stipends. And to Leslie and Roger from SAS too.
Anne: very happy about international students being presented online. The council has settled on academic integrity as a policy priority for the semester. The administration presented the issue as being particularly problematic for international students b/c of language issues. So we’re upset about that. We’re going to promote resources for academic integrity. The issue of prejudice against international students in terms of do they cheat?

Alejandro: the application is now online for the leadership retreat. I’d like to thank the committee for working really hard. We now have to send out the flyers and publicize the event more. I’d like to get volunteers from each school and you can post it around your schools. Please email me to volunteer.

Dan: this leadership retreat is free of charge. It’s a phenomenal resource for any grad student here at Penn who will be back here next year.

Wenny: if it’s free of charge, how do you make sure people come?

Alejandro: the application process has several essays, so I guess we’re figuring that if they took the time to fill out the application, then they’ll come. It’s a rigorous process.

Dan: 2 weeks from tonight, we’ll have a speaker on financial aid, I’m told. This is your time to ask questions about loans, grants, why do international students pay more for their student loans? All those hard questions, this is your chance to ask them. This meeting is going to be open, so if you have friends who want to know more as well, invite them.

Anne: if you know someone knowledgeable on international financial aid, please let me know.

Old Business & New Business

Chris: I want to make a motion that GAPSA has the right to weigh in on policy changes that affect students. We should have the right to review it.

Tim: that doesn’t affect grad students. He said it’s only on the common application for undergrads.

Anne: some grad schools do use the common application too.

Dan: friendly amendment – to create an ad hoc committee to review policy changes and make recommendations.

Lucas: would you also chair that committee?

Chris: yes.

In favor of this motion: 18
Motion passes. We’ll make committee on it with Chris as chair.

Anne: I would like to suggest to make recommendation to Senate to not implement this policy of self-disclosure.

Roger: I agree with you, Anne.

Anne: I would like to make a motion to make a recommendation to the faculty senate to not implement the policy.

Chris: 2nd

Alina: do you think from a female student point of view that it’ll make her feel safer?

Leslie: I’m just thinking that if they still have to hire them anyway, it seems like a silly policy.

Alejandro: he never really answered my question.

Dan: there was a grad student. There were several faculty members – Professor Scott Ward, he was arrested for child porn on his computer. He was convicted. And it’s more than child porn. It’s a whole bunch of crimes against children. It’s questionable if they had done a background check that it would have shown up. Econ professor who bludgeoned his wife to death.

Chris: in answer to Alina, I would suggest that instilling policies that make people feel safer when they’re not actually making things safer is not a way to go.

Jacqui: if they can’t legally not hire anybody, why do they do background checks on staff?

Dan: they do place restrictions on staff who have records.

Victor: why does GAPSA have to take a position on this?

Dan: we don’t. it’s up to you guys.

Anne: it’s a suggestion I made b/c of the worry about academic freedom. I think Penn will set a precedent for cutting academic freedom down.

David Chao: but how does breaking the law or not breaking the law infringe on academic freedom?

Andrew: it’s about having restrictions being placed on you. You can’t do certain things that other faculty can do.
Jacqui: nobody else does this right now in the Ivy League, and it’s something we really should think about. I don’t think we want to be known to be the very first school to put this on our faculty.

Anne: I motion that GAPSA on behalf of grad students will recommend to Faculty Senate to not implement the policy that requires our faculty to self-disclose.

All in favor: 18
Opposed: 3
Abstentions: 2

Motion passes.

Dan: motion to close meeting
Chris: 2nd

Meeting adjourned: 9:08pm