MINUTES FOR THE Sixth GA MEETING OF 2017-2018

Wednesday, November 29, 2017
6:00-8:30 pm

Houston Hall
Ben Franklin Room

I. Food is served

II. General Assembly Meeting
Ben Franklin Room

6:00 – 7:15 pm

a. Approve Minutes from November 8
   • Passes
b. Deputy appointment
   • approved
c. Finance Presentation (Discretionary)
   • [ask Dean to see slides from 11/29]
   • Traunch / omnibus vote, explained by David
   • Question: is the money allocated proportional to the size of the initial request? [in this case, it’s not a blanket $1,000, even though it ended up with those amounts. Also, in the past, groups have asked for more than they need in the hopes of increasing what they get]
   • It passes
d. NAGPS Conference updates
   • Updates from David, on potential conflicts between grad student goals and university administration goals
   • Research Council has been asking about data with respect to graduation completion times, and years and funding (we do have peer institution data)
   • As of March, RC worked with admin for them to publish data about Penn’s grad students (Buyan currently working to make remaining data available, e.g. broken down by school)
   • Question from the floor about how often we should ask data to be updated [for now, just asking for blanket of current data]
   • Question: are any stats available for professional students? [Buyan: not sure what level of info will be public. We’re also trying to collect data on our own, to be able to compare with what the university publishes. This could be something for Professional Council to work on]
   • Update from another’s NAGPS presentation (law and org dynamics student): 5 main publishers publish over 50% of
published research. Paywalls become a problem after graduation, which disadvantages academics and professionals. Wants to work with GAPSA on addressing this in the future.

• GA votes to have David proceed with Faculty Senate / teach-in initiative

e. Central Diversity Office

• Identity exercise with Post-Its
• IDEAL Advocacy Committee is spearheading central diversity office initiative. Seeking a physical space as well as a resource office, for students experiencing marginalization or discrimination at Penn.
• Various existing resources don’t address a person’s entire identity. For example, a GA rep who is a Black woman attests to being referred away from the Women’s Center because they told her the issue may have stemmed instead from her being Black.
• Retention of Black students can’t be monitored by BGAPSA because the administration doesn’t make the requisite demographic data available at all. Also, the breakdown of Black student enrollment across the diaspora isn’t public data.
• Also seeking a bias reporting system, which would be helpful for students who don’t have a place to turn in response to microaggressions and the like.
• These have been ongoing requests for at least a decade, according to old minutes. Penn still doesn’t have a person whose sole responsibility is to improve the campus experience with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
• Lloyd attests to the ongoing nature of this process, having served on relevant committees for the past three years. Also, makes point that the splintering of resource offices serves to erase broad, complex problems.
• Survey sent out.
• Peer institutions have such offices as the one we want.
• Discussion period:
  • Question: For undergrads as well as grad students? [yes, both. Also, advocacy coming from UC represents undergrads and also faculty and staff]
  • Question: Office, or person? [Office. Now someone got “chief diversity officer” title, but it’s more than one role. Relationship with cultural centers, and their autonomy, still TBD.] Wharton has a new DNI management person to talk to.
  • (follow up answer) Vagueness in the ask reflects the fact that the admin should be planning how this fits into that structure, not grad students.

f. Tax Cuts and Job Act update
• Brenda update. There was a Congress call-in this morning, and a photo campaign. Grad Student Center also had one of these, and GET-UP held a work-in as well.
• Miles update: the Senate version may not include the grad student provisions, but they may be added in the reconciliation process. We need to keep the pressure up.

g. Exec Board Updates:
  • Equity & Access: shows us Penn’s current access map – it isn’t very intersectional. Wants to do participatory access mapping. There is precedent for this, and we have partners in place (and software). There will be map-a-thons, and we hope to have as much contribution as possible.
  • E&A Chair is looking for feedback, and involvement.

h. Mental Health Survey & Deputy Assignment
• Student Life update.
• Wants to appoint a deputy, Matt Lee. And another, Ben Truong. Also Ben Paren.
  • All are voted in as deputies.
• Wants to have a mental health survey ready to share next semester.

i. GAPSA 101/Finance Sustainability
• RC will have two new initiatives: Research Thursdays, and Research Gallery. First event is tomorrow at 3pm in the 2nd floor conference room of the GSC. We want research at Penn to be more visible, so it’s open to everyone.
• Finance Structure: we’ll be looking at implementing some of the suggestions from the GAPSA Renewal project. We want to create a proposal to give to the next, incoming Exec group. gapsa.future@gmail.com is an address to send input to.

j. General Assembly pictures
  • Hall of Flags

III. Committee Meetings:  
  7:15 – 7:30 pm
  Find your committee: Various locations

IV. Council Meetings:  
  7:30 – 8:30 pm
  IDEAL Council: Golkin Room
  Professional Council: Ben Franklin Room
  Research Council: Bishop White Room

V. Happy Hour:  
  8:30 – 11:00 pm
  Wahoo’s