GSS Meeting Minutes: October 13, 2011

Called 5:30 pm

I. Welcome to our friends!

Today is Bring a Friend to GSS Day...welcome friends!

II.A. Committee Reports

VP Ralston explained the GSS committee structure: how various committees are advised by the Vice Presidents, who liaise between their committees and the Executive Committee. Each Chair/Co-chair gives a report summarizing their work at each GSS meeting.

Communications Committee - Vice President Ralston.
VP Ralston is currently ad hoc Chair of the Communications Committee. He is trying to get the What’s Happening email up and running again, and is working with The Review to get a GSS article published each month.

Events Committee - Senators Scott and Bloomfield.
The PhD movie will be shown on campus on October 27, with screenings at 4:30 pm and 7:00 pm in the Roselle Center for the Arts. Graduate Student Organizations will have tables set up from 5:30-6:00 pm and a cocktail reception from 6:00-7:00 pm. Tickets are $5 and go on sale on Monday. A portion of the proceeds goes to United Way.

The Grad Expo is November 9 from 3-7 in the Trabant Multi-Purpose Room. They need several volunteers to participate in or moderate panels, and to help with registration and general logistics.

The Second Annual Grad Forum will occur on May 4, 2012 in Clayton Hall.

The trailer for the PhD Movie was shown.

The Committee will meet next on Wednesday, October 19 at 5:30 pm at Bleeker Street Cafe.

Organization Committee - President Bonistall.
The Organization Committee looks at the Constitution, and most recently they have updated the GSS Handbook.
They also wrote the first bill of the academic year: SB-1112-XX. This was presented during New Business.

Senator Pearson discussed the structure of the GSS. Philosophically, a Senate consists of Senators, who elect their own officers and serve on committees; only Senators can serve on committees. The Organization Committee would like to move the GSS toward a Government, where all graduate students are members and the Senate function is retained, but committees can be composed of both Senators and non-Senators. In this format, all graduate students will be able to vote for the GSS officers. Senator Pearson encouraged everyone to attend Organization Committee meetings to provide input on the process.

SB-1112-XX is being introduced: so that active members are formally included as members in GSS. President Bonistall underscored the fact that this bill reflects the growth of the organization.

Senator Adams expressed concern that the changes would take power away from Senators. Senator Ayers clarified that the right to vote is restricted to Senators. Senator Adams thinks that having more people at meeting would dilute the efficacy of the organization. President Bonistall clarified that we are trying to be inclusive of all graduate student participation; we want to welcome more students than just the Senators.

Senator Barclay asked what the distinction is in what we are trying to do. President Bonistall responded that it sends a message that participation of active members is valued.

Senator Jain asked about who participates in Senate meetings. President Bonistall described that GSS has been run as a Government. In a Senate, the only people who are allowed to speak are Senators. As a Government, all members are allowed to speak, but only Senators are allowed to vote. This allows time for public comments and concerns on issues that come before the Government. The way GSS is operating is not in line with what our Constitution says.

Senator Audette requested clarification as to whether non-Senators would be able to Chair committees. President Bonistall responded that this would need to be discussed as we move through this process.

VP Richard suggested that this discussion be tabled until New Business.

*Social Committee - Senator Frederick and Officer Markland.*
Officer Markland announced a tailgate this Saturday, October 15 from 12:30 to 3:30 at the Fred Rust Ice Arena parking lot. Participants are requested to bring food or drinks to share. Check the Facebook page for more information and a sign-up of what to bring.
The next GSS Happy Hour will be on November 10 from 7:30 to 9:30 at Caffe Gelato following the GSS meeting.

There will be an ice skating social in November at the Fred Rust Ice Arena. The date will be announced soon. Skate rental is $3 for students.

There will be a Final Exams Coffee Break during the first week of December, potentially on Reading Day. The date will be announced, and there will be free coffee.

There will be a Super Bowl party on February 5, 2012. The time and location are to be determined.

The next meeting is Monday, November 7 at 12:30 pm at Brew Ha Ha.

_Diversity Committee - Senators Hefner and Adams._

The Diversity Committee is the process of opening possibilities to work with the UD Connect program and the University Diversity and Equity Commission. They are interested in collaborating in existing programs. They are also trying to reach out to faculty in their departments to identify pertinent issues. They are planning to reach out to the graduate student body to see what diversity issues they see as being the most important at UD. They are interested in hosting an event for graduate students/professors to discuss diversity issues at UD.

They want to expand the definition/scope of Diversity, and they are still in the thinking phase of this.

The next meeting is November 4 at 12:30 pm.

_Student Life Committee - Senator Jain._

Senator Jain advertised for a Co-chair.

They are interested in being able to buy into the Employee Health Insurance Plan as an option for graduate students to help cover the cost of prescriptions.

They are discussing implementing a mentoring program for incoming graduate students by program. This already happens in some departments; Senator Jain would like to know what kind of mentorship programs already exist in departments.

Last year we had successful representation on the Parking and Transportation Committee. We are trying to get this committee re-established to help solve any graduate parking issues.
Senators passionate about improving the graduate student condition can attend the next meeting on Tuesday October 18, from 12 noon to 1:00 pm in Trabant.

**Sustainability Committee - Senators Thomson and Ardini.**
The Sustainability Committee is looking into a number of projects for this year.

Fume hood stickers: fume hood stickers use significantly less energy when they are closed. These stickers would be informative, and could help a lot in energy savings. They are interested in minimize waste at move-out by setting up a donation station for students as an alternative to throwing them out. They want to put stickers on paper towel dispensers, similar to the ones on the fume hoods, in order to promote reduced waste. They want to survey graduate students regarding building energy efficiency.

Volunteer Opportunities:
- Community Gardening in Wilmington throughout the fall
- Ministry of Caring Daycare Wilmington, DE (every other Friday 9am-noon)
Any volunteer opportunities that arise can be emailed to Greg Ardini (gardini@udel.edu) or Heather Thomson (hthompson@udel.edu)

They are still conducting a canopy study of the campus from last year.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 25 at 11:00 am in the Townsend Hall Lobby.

**External Committees - President Bonistall.**
These committees are either university-wide or community-based committees. Interested in serving on one of these committees? Email her at ejb@udel.edu

**Faculty Senate - Senators Portnoi and Pons.**
Senator Portnoi explained that the Faculty Senate is a body similar to the GSS, but addresses issues related to the Faculty.

UD has been re-accredited by Middle States Commission. Their accreditation report mentioned that UD still has work to do regarding "diversity". Provost Apple announced that UD is within the 100-150 rank of world universities according to the AWRU world university rankings. President Harker encouraged the university to not rest on its laurels, and to improve diversity in the university.

**Parking Committee**
President Bonistall advertised for a graduate student representative to sit on the appeals board. Anyone interested should contact President Bonistall.
Diversity and Equity Commission
President Bonistall gets to sit on this committee, which discusses high-level diversity issues at UD.

Financial Aid Task Force
VP Ralston attended a meeting of the Financial Aid Task Force. They are interested in several graduate student volunteers for focus groups. A sign-up sheet was passed around; anyone else interested should contact VP Ralston.

Comments from Dr. Riordan and Dr. Martin
Vice Provost Riordan welcomed everyone. Dr. Martin thanked everyone for their participation and interest. They had no updates.

II.B. Information Dissemination
Officer Markland explained that her role is to help Senators do their jobs. In particular, Senators are responsible for attending meetings; they should send a proxy if they cannot attend. Furthermore, Senators are representing their programs, not themselves. They should discuss issues with their constituents and vote on their behalf. Additionally, Senators must serve on a committee. Finally, Senators are responsible for disseminating information to their programs. Starting this month, the GSS officers will take control of information dissemination, to which Senators can follow up.

Senator Miller asked whether Senators can be recognized through this process. President Bonistall replied that some Senators have difficulty accessing email lists, and there is some general inconsistency as to what information students receive. Having one email go to everyone will ensure consistency. Senators are free to follow up with their constituents.

Officer Markland reiterated that Senators should follow up with their constituents.

Senator Jain suggested including a list of which Senators were in attendance.

Senator Racco asked whether Senators can opt in or out of this. President Bonistall replied that Senators are still responsible for disseminating information after this meeting.

Senator Adams suggested that Senators utilize the departmental directors of graduate studies to help facilitate logistics of contacting students in the department.
President Bonistall asked that anyone with other ideas contact her so that the Executive Committee can discuss them.

Senator Barclay confirmed that the GSS email should be CCed on all major emails to constituents.

II.C. Approval of September Minutes
President Bonistall provided background on approval of the minutes: approving and then publishing the minutes helps to promote the GSS and its work. Each month, the Secretary will send the minutes (along with a highlights reel) to all GSS members, and the GSS will vote to approve the minutes at the next meeting.

Senator Norbutus asked whether she should vote on the minutes since she wasn’t present in September. Senator Pearson replied that it is a personal choice.

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

II.D. Town Hall Meeting Vote
At the September meeting, Senator Jain brought up the international student fee. We want to know whether the issue has been resolved, or whether it needs to be addressed further. President Bonistall asked Senators to contact their constituents and determine whether a Town Hall style meeting with Dr. Riordan is needed.

Senator Jain asked whether this meeting would include discussion of what additional services are provided. Dr. Riordan responded that the Provost has put together a working group to enrich OISS. He suggested getting together a working group of graduate students to comment on the working document. Senator Jain suggested that members of the Provost’s working group be present at the Town Hall meeting. Dr. Riordan emphasized that timing will be critical so that the group has put together the document before the meeting so that questions can be answered.

President Bonistall wants to know whether a Town Hall meeting is needed, or whether information distribution by Senators is sufficient. She called for a vote on who wants to have a Town Hall meeting. The majority was in favor of having a meeting, so she will work with Dr. Riordan to plan the meeting.

President Bonistall asked for input on the timing of the meeting.

Senator Audette recommended waiting until there is a preliminary report in hand so that we have concrete information to share. Senator Jain concurs.

Senator Muskavitch asked whether there will be graduate input in the working group.
Dr. Riordan responded that graduate students were involved in some of this work in the spring. The working group wants to get input on the document via some subset of the GSS. He recommends having the Town Hall meeting after the document has been prepared; this document will incorporate feedback from the GSS subgroup.

III.A. Approval of 2011-2012 GSS Handbook
Senator Jain asked for more time to read the document and suggested postponing the vote until November. He motioned to table the motion to approve until next meeting. The motion was seconded and approved.

President Bonistall encouraged Senators to take the extra time to read the document and point out any inconsistencies to her.

III.B. Introduction of SB-1112-XX
Senators Pearson introduced the bill. The Organization Committee is trying to bring the GSS Constitution more into line with our actual practices. This bill makes the Senate more inclusive, while still restricting voting privileges to Senators.

Senator Jain asked why there is a need to include all graduate students as members of the Senate, and why we don’t wait until all the changes are ready to approve at once. Senator Pearson replied that we are currently violating the Constitution, and this will rectify that immediately.

Senator Norbutus recommended that there be active member requirements to compliment requirements on Senators. President Bonistall replied that there are no requirements on active non-Senator members. There will need to be discussion about instituting active membership requirements. At present, we cannot even discuss this because “active members” are not technically members of the Senate. Senator Norbutus followed up by asking why there is not a concurrent motion to enact active standing requirements. President Bonistall replied that this is a small step in the right direction. She was concerned about too many changes at once being overwhelming. Senator Pearson stated that Chairs are required to come to GSS meetings.

Senator Patterson asked whether it would be productive to pass an amendment defining active membership.

Senator Jain mentioned that there is another clause in the Constitution that states that GSS meetings are open to all, while still restricting membership to Senators.

Senator Adams agreed with Senator Jain; Senators are responsible to their constituents, and opening membership to all dilutes the potency of the Senator’s representative role. President Bonistall reiterated that voting is not affected by
A non-Senator explained that it is beneficial for her to participate on committees.

Senator Patterson clarified that we should define active membership in order to clarify the issues being discussed.

President Bonistall clarified that the intent of this bill is not to discuss active membership; it is to define the GSS as a body that represents the graduate students of UD and not just the Senators.

Senator Audette recommended that the bill be tabled until an amendment has been prepared that addresses active membership.

Senator Norbutus recommended that the Organization Committee address this issue at its next meeting.

A non-Senator stated that it is important to inform graduate students that they can participate.

Senator Patterson suggested passing a resolution to welcome active participation.

Senator Pearson noted that this bill brings the Constitution and the Handbook back into sync. The Handbook reflects our current practice, but it does not match the Constitution, which supersedes it.

A non-Senator expressed concern about what it means to be an active member in light of the bill. He recommended that speaking on the floor be filtered by the student’s Senator.

Senator Skordos asked whether President Bonistall is concerned whether the GSS is not representing graduate students. She replied that the Constitution says that the GSS represents the Senators, not the students.

Senator Jain stated that our focus should be first that Senators are elected appropriately.

President Bonistall noted that there is a one-month waiting period where the Organization Committee can discuss and address the issues raised. She encouraged everyone to attend the Organization Committee meeting to discuss and work out these issues.

There was a motion to table the bill to the Organization Committee.
III.C. General Discussion

Senator Jain asked whether Senators can have access to fellow Senators’ emails. President Bonistall replied that Senator-specific information is being sent to Senators only, and not the entire GSS members list. Senator Jain motioned that Senators’ emails be given to all Senators. The motion passed.

Senator Patterson announced that there will be a town hall meeting on October 19 from 7:30 to 9:30 pm in Trabant Multi-purpose Rooms A & B to discuss the Troy Davis shooting.

Senator Ardini encouraged that graduate students should be informed about committee meetings. Senator Norbutus recommended that committee Chairs write a promotional blurb. Senator Jain recommended that the GSS officers send an email to graduate students about committees.

A non-member emphasized the need for Senators to personalize their information dissemination emails. He recommended that there be a webform where Senators can customize what goes to their programs from a baseline generic email.

Senators Hefner and Dahl recommended that committee information come from the GSS officers. There was consensus on this point.

Senator Audette motioned to adjourn. The motion passed.

Adjourned 7:22 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Castillo
GSS Secretary