

Graduate Student Senate—General Meeting

Date: 9-13-06

Call to order: 12:08 PM

Presiding: President Ray Pugh

Officers Present:

Belmont, Patrick
Dailey, Hannah
Maradeo, Marie
Richendrfer, Holly
Shoval, Karyn

Also Present: Kate Scarpino, Karen Huang, Kathleen Hutnik

Active Units: 23/23

Units Represented: 18/23 (78% of active units)

Inactive Units: All units active at beginning of new academic year.

Agenda

- I. Introduction of Interim GLO Director
- II. Tech Fee Committee Update
- III. GRC Update
- IV. K-Time
- V. Upcoming Events
- VI. Interfaith Dialogue Student Association (IDSA) Vote
- VII. Need Volunteers

Minutes

I. Introduction of Interim GLO Director

John Smeaton, Vice Provost for Student Affairs, invited all graduate students to attend Karen Huang's farewell reception in the UC Faculty Lounge on Thursday, September 28th, 3:30-5 PM. He also introduced Kathleen Hutnik, the newly-appointed Interim Director of the Graduate Life Office. Kathleen will be spending 20% of her time on GLO duties until a permanent GLO Director can be chosen.

II. Tech Fee Committee Update

Wes Atkinson presented an update from the Technology Fee Committee. The Tech Fee has been increased to \$300 per year as of this year. Based on a survey of peer institutions, the committee believes that our fee is high compared to other schools. The committee has struggled to find out what services the fee subsidizes at Lehigh. Wes outlined the six main findings from the Tech Fee Committee.

1. There are real costs associated with technology and Lehigh must provide these services to remain among the leading institutions.
2. The tech fee at Lehigh is substantially higher than the tech fee most comparable universities.
3. Last year, the tech fee was increased by 25 percent and the Library and Technology Services budget was increased by 5 percent. The increase in the LTS budget came almost entirely from the increase in the tech fee.
4. It is an unfair practice to charge de facto employees for the tools they need to fulfill their professional duties.

5. The tech fee has a large impact on the finances of TAs, RAs, GAs, and Fellows who make up a majority of the graduate population.
6. The spirit of “full support” financial packages is no longer being met because of the recent introduction of the tech fee.

Student responses included the following points:

- Does the list of comparable universities include both public and private schools? Either way, the public/private status doesn't change the affect that the tech fee has on graduate students' finances.
- Graduate students are not employees. Our tech fee position statement should not imply that we see ourselves as such.
- Students use technology for teaching, research, class work, and personal needs, not just for their “jobs”.
- The position statement should suggest where the funding for the tech fee should come from. We should propose solutions where we see problems.
- Funding for the tech fee should come from the same source as students' support packages (e.g. grant funding for RAs, appropriate college/department for TAs).
- What if stipends were \$300 higher? What if stipends were \$300 lower, but we didn't get changed a tech fee? Maybe this is all just a semantics argument. The tech fee only hurts because you have to pay for it in one big chunk. If you never saw the money, maybe you wouldn't care.

Based on the large number of responses, Wes suggested that the Tech Fee Committee convene an open-forum session for students to discuss the issues.

III. GRC Update

Patrick Belmont and Jen Venditti asked the unit reps to discuss a list of the most pressing issues facing graduate students at Lehigh. Patrick and Jen will keep the following list in mind when attending Graduate and Research Committee meetings. They will place an emphasis on issues that can be immediately solved or have the largest impact on students.

- Stipends
- Health Insurance—Our insurance costs will be going up 25 percent next year. Our coverage may be cheap, but it is not true health insurance; we have accident and illness coverage. We have coverage up to a set limit and the scope of the coverage is narrow (e.g. no dental care).
- Late-Stage Funding—Some students find themselves without funding late in their PhD programs. Their grants end and the TA positions go to incoming students. Some students cannot afford to stay, so they leave Lehigh with no degree.
- Advisor/Advisee Relations—Propose minimal standards for common issues such as timely review of written documents (e.g. dissertation chapters).
- TA Evaluations—Lehigh does not currently give students the opportunity to review their TAs as part of the course evaluation process. Graduate students seeking academic positions after Lehigh will be competing with candidates who can present documented teaching reviews. Greg Reihman, the faculty development coordinator with LTS, believes that TA evaluations should be standard practice at Lehigh.

- Graduate Student Representation—Wes Atkinson said that Berkeley gets approval from their graduate student governing body before making decisions that have a large impact on graduate life.

IV. K-Time

Karen Huang offered her goodbye remarks. She thanked all the students for making her five years as Director of the Graduate Life Office rewarding and fulfilling. She believes the GSS has made significant progress in the last few years and is poised to have play a significant role in student life at Lehigh. Karen also gave a few GLO announcements:

- The Women’s Exchange has only five slots open and the October 5th meeting is the last day to sign up.
- The next professional development seminar will be a special discussion on jobs for people with a social science background. The seminar will be October 23rd. Details TBA.
- Karyn Shoval’s sister is directing a play in New York City entitled “An Olive on the Seder Plate”. This controversial production examines the issues surrounding the occupation of Gaza and the turmoil in the Middle East. Transportation will be provided to New York for the show on Saturday, October 7th. The vans will depart at 4 PM and return by Midnight. Snacks will be provided on the vans.

V. Upcoming Events

- Catacombs Party
 - Saturday, September 30th, 8:30-11:30 PM
 - Beer, Wine, Food, Fun
- Founder’s Day Party
 - Friday, October 20th, Details TBA
- New York City Bus Trip
 - Saturday, October 28th, Departs 10 AM
- \$10 per student (really cheap!)
- Possible Future Events: kids’ Halloween party, tailgates in November

VI. Interfaith Dialogue Student Association (IDSA) Vote

The IDSA hopes to foster communication and understanding between graduate students of various faiths. They will sponsor guest speakers, discussion groups, and social events that promote unity and harmony. The unit reps unanimously voted to grant graduate club status to the IDSA with a first-year budget of \$200.

VII. Need Volunteers

- The parking appeals committee meets on Thursdays, 4-5 PM. No graduate appeals can be processed until a graduate student volunteers for this committee. Contact Hannah (h1r3) to sign up.
- Holly (har3) is planning a symposium about graduate school for undergraduate students. This event will be on a weeknight in October. She needs volunteers to help plan the discussion topics and serve as panelists to answer questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 1 PM.