

GSA Meeting #9 – December 5, 2006

Minutes

In attendance:

John	Ryan	Mark	Bastien
Amanda	Bree	Meg	Tina
Robyn	Katia	Erin	Stephen

1. Approval of minutes
 - Motion to approve minutes from last meeting put forth by Ryan, seconded by Patrick
 - Motion passed; minutes approved
2. CASSC update
 - 3rd, 4th years were surveyed about the issue of graduating with their colleges (CASSC was not part of the survey); convocation will not be changed this year but is likely to change in the following year (likely because some colleges are too large); the university administration will make the final decision on this matter
 - Don O’Leary was a guest speaker: he discussed the creation of a Sustainability Office within the university, which would deal with recycling, retrofitting, research into community issues related to sustainability, etc.
 - Pete Wood from Trent IT addressed the current concern about wiping computers to get access to the university’s network: to get around this, it is possible to install wireless networks (apparently inexpensively); if a particular lab group can demonstrate an urgent need for network access, they can be put on a priority list
3. Grad Studies update/Senate update
 - a document has been created outlining the procedure for selecting which instructors are allowed to supervise graduate students: the instructors are nominated by the respective programs, they must have a PhD (or a degree appropriate to the program), have peer-reviewed publications, possess research funds, have a successful teaching record (undergrad courses, committee participation), don’t necessarily need to have tenure
 - WECS has officially changed terminology: the PhD comprehensive/qualifying exam is now called a candidacy exam:
 - o these exams are held *in camera*
 - o people can defer this exam (“deferral with remediation”) – for those who are qualified/capable but lacking in specific knowledge
 - o it is difficult to get external examiners, but it is still required for MSc defences (if necessary, video or conference calls are permissible, and a last resort is to get an external examiner from Trent)
 - Stephen spoke with Doug Evans and the Senate secretary about sharing Senate documents with GSA executive members so we can all be informed
 - Head of Security (Risk Management) presented 2 new policies: the work alone policy and the off-campus safety policy – these will likely have implications for research

- conducted late at night, in the field, etc. so it is important that we review it to ensure our ability to conduct research won't be negatively impacted
- Vision 2014 document – the administration is looking for feedback, the document is available on MyTrent if anyone is interested in reading it
4. Academic Regulations update
- The Canadian Studies 500 class has changed format – Indigenous/Native studies students will be taught by Native studies faculty
5. Senate budget
- Deferred maintenance costs = 7 million is needed for main campus, 300k for Trail
 - o The ministry gives us 40k per year, from other sources we have under 1 million per year, Trent will get a couple million from the federal govt.
 - o Some money will be used for “prettying up” the campus to attract new students by appealing to parents; don't want to take money from other areas for this purpose; want to keep student:faculty ratio the same
 - o General desire to avoid graduate expansion because we seem to cost the university money, but they don't seem to be accounting for the research money we bring in, as well as other benefits (financial and otherwise)
 - Academic staffing – last year 27 positions were open, Trent hired 21 tenure track professors, but several people resigned so we're only up by 4 new faculty; Trent hired some individuals under 12 month contracts, but we currently need 22 more hires to fill positions
 - (Unrelated to Senate budget, related to a tuition waiver...) U of Lethbridge wants us to send them a letter on our letterhead supporting their tuition waiver initiative: they don't have any child care facilities on campus, so it seems they want a waiver for tuition, however, we don't have any child care here either, the child care here is open to the general public, so we can't really say much in a letter – we need more information on what they want
 - other budget matters: Roxanne needs receipts from social directors, communications in order to update our expenses
6. Survey (Tuition subcommittee)
- feedback from GSA exec members –
 - o one question has “maybe” and “I don't want to answer”; use only one of these choices
 - o for certain questions it may be necessary to make sure only one checkmark can be entered into form
 - o Katia suggested that the last question not be so open-ended, and instead that students could rate each issue on a scale
 - o want to keep survey short (<10 questions) to maximize the number of completed surveys we receive
 - o Bastien suggested that we should have one question that allows students to write comments
 - constitution subcommittee
 - o major issues: current constitution entitles a stipend of \$50 to all exec members including program reps. (this totals \$800 in this year's budget), but

we are thinking of having more reps, this cost might become excessive in future years; 3 options were discussed:

- Keep the stipend as-is
- Certain key positions get the \$50 stipend (President, VP, Treasurer, etc.), while others don't
- Have a fully-funded transition meeting between old & new executives and people in the university administration, have lunch (sandwich platters etc.), spend the day discussing past and current initiatives, goals, responsibilities, etc., conclude the day with a nice dinner
- we are considering changing the timing of the AGMs to “autumn and spring” rather than “September and April”, but if we have a transition meeting we could start planning the September AGM at that time, we would be more organized, and additionally it would be easier to get quorum if the fall AGM was held during the 1st week of school
- defining roles for executive: VP is in charge of elections – there is the possibility of having our elections on-line using WebCT; everyone is registered in thesis course so everyone has access to WebCT, Loretta Durst is supportive of this initiative; likely would result in a better voter turn out
- Bastien commented that it would be useful to have more time for a transition meeting, but would prefer if only the outgoing executive members gathered for dinner as a form of celebration/reward
- additional points: changes to constitution would only take effect in September; we are supposed to get nominations for new executive before the AGM

7. Information Technology issues

- Tina's findings are that the current network doesn't seem to work properly for research purposes, but we are very reliant on computers for our research,
- we shouldn't have to have our computers wiped, reformatted: the position of IT is that this won't be necessary in the future, we will go wireless eventually, but this may take some time
- WEGS secretary bringing issue forward next week in a meeting with various members of the administration
- input from other graduate programs: Modeling – even lab computers are a problem because we don't have administrative powers (for instance, we can't install software onto our computers), grad students should get the same access as staff members do; we need our own type of account (different from undergrads)
- we currently need two accounts to use the network (both staff and student), which is not effective or efficient
- the graduate student MyTrent portal is now operational; we could use this function but we need something closer to staff access
- telephone access also important (if you are having computer problems, you need to call IT!) but not every office has a phone (and not every student has an office) which makes communicating with IT difficult
- there is also the issue of the voice recognition directory for graduate students (the university doesn't want to include graduate students in this directory)

8. Social Events

- Christmas (Festivus) party on Saturday 8:30PM – everyone must be there!
- January 11th – Instead of a potluck, we will have a free lunch for all grad students (no alcoholic beverages) at the Cat's Ass pub, free pizza (or another Aramark food option) for all grad students, especially new January-start students
- Robyn indicated that people at the Ceilie are interested in holding grad student events as well
- February 10th – Group tickets for the Petes' game against Guelph; group price applies for groups of 25 people, so we'll order enough tickets to get a group price, it shouldn't be difficult to get this many students to attend
- March 9th event will be planned... possibly a wine-tasting at Brio Gusto?
- March 30th is the tentative date for the Year End party
- Symons Gala will be held in April

9. Seminar Series

- Stephen will host tomorrow

10. AOB

- Next GSA meeting will be held in the New Year... Merry Christmas everyone!!