

GSC Board of Directors Meeting
December 5, 2002
Winnett Lounge

The meeting began at 12:08 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Directors Present:

Heather Cox, Chip Sumner, Jeff Bergthorson, Michael Johnson, Alex Tobias, Marissa Mock, Steve Pracko, John Choi, John Bender, Ying Gong, Ileana Carpen, Surelys Galano, Terrell Neal.

Directors Absent:

Harish Bhat, Ileana Carpen, Isaac Chenchiah, Stephanie Chow, John Dabiri, Michael Fleming, Niki Galownia, Tim Lesko, Graeme Smith, Theofilos Strinopoulos, Chris Veasy, Lauren Webb.

PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

A. Introduction of Guests.

Surelys Galano was introduced as a new BoD member from Biology.

B. Approval of the Minutes of November.

Chip had not yet read the minutes for November. He asked if anyone else had looked at them; no one seemed to have read them. He requested that we table the approval of the minutes until he had a chance to read them. This was agreed to, so we will approve November's minutes in January.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Summary of Budget Presentation

Margo Marshak arranged for Al Horvath and Steve Koonin to meet with undergraduate student leaders and members of the GSC. Her secretary invited only the officers, but Chip also arranged for the committee chairs to attend. Basically, Al Horvath gave a presentation about Caltech's financial state and took questions; he also asked for suggestions about communicating with the student body. Chip asked if anyone who had been present at the meeting would like to start the conversation.

The budget situation was discussed in some detail.

Chip said that Al Horvath and the Provost had emphasized that they would like to communicate with students, and that they were willing to give the same presentation to other people. However, they would like to limit the number of

people present, so that questions can be asked. They are also worried about confidentiality. Also, Al Horvath was interested in hearing people's ideas for where budget cuts could be made.

We discussed graduate student benefits for a little while. Heather said that we could probably locate other inefficiencies on campus that don't involve graduate student life. Ileana mentioned that they could charge undergraduates for health insurance (as happens at many universities). Chip said there would be no changes in our health plan next year, but that changes would probably be implemented after that. He believes that Caltech is leaning toward self-insuring; in this case, Caltech would need to buy into a PPO plan. Other things that Caltech could do were mentioned. They could cut back on the campus landscaping, but several people thought that money had been given to Caltech specifically for that purpose. Charging for paper and/or printing costs might be useful (although Surelys and Chip pointed out that this might cheapen the quality of life). Caltech will probably begin charging for parking soon; Jeff suggested that Catalina residents should not have to pay additional parking fees, since parking is often included in rent.

John Choi asked exactly how much money we were talking about here. We discussed figures for a little while. Chip said that he was interested in getting figures on how much money was spent on different programs for graduate students in order to effectively decide what benefits were least worth their costs. There seemed to be a general consensus that there seem to be a lot of administrative staff on campus, and that Caltech could probably successfully cut its costs there.

Action: It was agreed that Al Horvath and Steve Koonin should, if they're willing, give this talk to other interested graduate students. The GSC can send out an email calling for interested people to attend and include a notice in the Newsletter. Ideally people from all departments will attend a meeting, so that information can be shared across campus. If the response is large, several meetings can be held.

2. Feynman Prize Committee

The Dean asked us to locate a graduate student to sit on the Feynman Prize committee. Chip sent this request to the Academics Committee, and Marissa volunteered for the position. The committee meets once or twice to discuss candidates for the prize and finalizes the decision via email. Someone asked whether the committee also picked the nominees; it seems that they choose from among nominees. Chip asked if anyone else was interested in taking the position. No one else volunteered.

Action: Marissa Mock was confirmed as the GSC representative for the Feynman Prize Committee.

3. Budget Committee Items

The Budget Committee had several items of business. Alex explained that clubfunding had \$3272 in undistributed funds. The Budget Committee had noticed that several clubs provided very good-looking advertising for their events, and asked how much such posters cost (glossy, color, professional quality). They cost \$1.50 apiece. The committee proposed that \$1000 of the unused clubfunding money be set aside as an advertising fund for GSC-sponsored events. Clubs could apply for extra funding from the advertising fund to cover better quality advertising costs. The Budget Committee wanted to move the remaining \$2272 from the clubfunding budget to unallocated funds. Finally, they reviewed the Dabney Drop Day funding request (they asked for “as much as the GSC wants to give”) and suggested that we provide \$250 for the party.

The floor was then open to discussion. John Choi asked if the funding for the Drop Day party was comparable to previous years. Chip said we hadn’t funded them before. Steve thought we’d funded them once; Chip said we hadn’t done it last year, so he didn’t know.

Marissa asked whether the advertising budget was meant to raise attendance at events or to raise the image of the GSC. She didn’t think improving the poster quality would necessarily raise the attendance at events. Jeff said that it would help to catch people’s eye, so that they would actually read the poster. Alex said it would help the advertisements stand out from the typically cluttered bulletin boards containing notices. Ileana asked whether we would use this sort of advertising for every event. Alex said that wasn’t the idea: it could be used for big events, like Gradiators, the end of term parties, etc. Chip said that it could also be used for big events that clubs hosted. John Bender asked if people might be paid for their help advertising/organizing such events. Chip said that issue was something to discuss at the Retreat. Historically the GSC has not done that, but we really need more volunteers and manpower to organize events.

Steve asked what would happen to new clubs formed during the year if the clubfunding money was reallocated. Alex said that he had considered that, and that he would ensure that money was there for that purpose. He said that our problem right now might be that we have too much money. Jeff agreed. We asked for more money from CABS this year to pay for more events. However, as mentioned before, the Social Committee is stretched thin, and it might be difficult to host everything we had in mind.

Action: \$250 was provided to Dabney House for their Drop Day party. The BoD voted to allocated \$1000 from the clubfunding budget for the GSC advertising fund, and to re-assign the remaining \$2272 from the clubfunding budget as unallocated funds.

4. Quickfunding Changes

The Budget Committee had some suggestions for modifying quickfunding. These were laid out in the Agenda. Basically, the quickfunding czar should check on any obvious problems with an event before sending the proposal to the BoD (however, he should not filter out proposals before the BoD vote). Then, once the proposal is sent out to the BoD, the first twenty-four hours will be set aside for the BoD to air concerns. After this, the proposal will be put to an email vote.

Alex explained that events can have problems that need to be discussed, and so it would be useful to set aside some time explicitly for discussion. Jeff said that this would make quickfunding less quick, but that it would be worth taking the time to solve any potential problems. We would tell people applying for funding that quickfunding will take slightly longer now. Alex mentioned that the first step, of checking on any obvious event problems, is not meant to be a filter or an opportunity for the quickfunding czar to select events. Basically, it is meant to allow the quickfunding czar to check on other events which might conflict with it, or bring up any problems he or she sees.

Jeff thought it would be useful to have a time for open discussion by the BoD about the funding issue, so that people can make comments or ask questions. Alex said that often questions arose: for example, people might want to make sure graduate students were going to be well-informed of an undergraduate party. Ileana asked whether this would be an open email discussion or whether comments would go to the quickfunding czar. Jeff said it would be good to have it open, but then people's email boxes might get flooded, which has been a problem in the past. Surelys suggested putting the discussion online, thus solving that problem. Mike Johnson, Jeff, and Alex said that this would be possible. John Choi requested that the site not be too flashy out of consideration for those with primitive web browsers.

Once the proposal has been submitted to the BoD, there will be twenty-four hours for posting to the discussion list. Then the vote can occur, unless more information is necessary. If it is, the quickfunding czar can ask the organizers for more information. The proposed wording in the Agenda said that "after all concerns are satisfactorily resolved" the vote can be taken; John Bender pointed out that there was no guarantee that all BoD members would have all their concerns resolved and be in agreement. Chip suggested that the Budget Committee work on the wording of the proposed changes.

Jeff also asked what happened to emails sent to quickfunding when he was gone. (They seem to just sit in his inbox.) He suggested that the emails be sent to the entire Budget Committee, so that if he is gone, requests for quickfunding will be answered promptly. This was agreed.

Action: The Budget Committee will work on producing new quickfunding rules in the spirit of the above, and forward quickfunding emails to the committee.

5. GSC Retreat

Chip thanked everyone for responding to his email asking about availability for the retreat. (He sent out an email asking whether people could come, and whether they would be willing to go off-campus if they planned to go.) The Steering Committee decided that the retreat would be much more effective if held off-campus, and so it will be held at Capra Ranch. The plan is to hold all of the official business and discussion on Saturday, so that people who cannot come up on Friday night or stay Saturday night can make a day trip to the ranch. Otherwise, the event is scheduled to start Friday night and end on Sunday morning. It is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of January 24, if there are no conflicts. No one had anything at the moment.

Action: Retreat scheduled for January 24-26, 2003, at Capra Ranch.

6. Web Development Team

Chip said that our current website looks somewhat outdated, and it's quite difficult to find anything on the site. No one has ever put very much work into the web design of the site (it was based on another website). Since we have some good web designers on the BoD, it might be a good time to try and redesign the website to give it a more updated look. (However, it's essential that it be easy to maintain.) We could also establish a template for committees to use on their websites (while still allowing some flexibility). In general, people approved of the idea.

Action: A web development team was created. Surelys, Mike Johnson, and Alex volunteered to be on it, and we will send out a message to the BoD asking for other interested people to volunteer.

7. Graduate Student Handbook

The committee chairs met to discuss the student handbook and figure out what sort of information it should contain. The idea is to create a small (under 100 pages, perhaps), concise handbook with references to other useful Caltech publications and websites for more information. The committee chairs came up with a list of topics, which have mostly been doled out to committees. Marissa asked who will be organizing the handbook. Ileana said that she will, and said that she could probably set up a website where people could post their handbook submissions for other people to read. Surelys asked whether this would replace the *Technique*; Chip said that hopefully it would supplement the *Technique* and be a more accessible, shorthand guide to Caltech. Surelys asked about a section in last year's *Technique* containing the GSC's Annual Report; it did not appear in this year's version, although it was meant to continue yearly. Chip knew that a copy of the Annual Report was on the website, but wasn't sure where.

Action: Ileana will set up the website for the handbook; hopefully committees can start submitting sections to her for posting soon.

8. Newsletter Bonus

Action: Steve's \$50 newsletter bonus was passed for the month of November

9. Next Meeting Date

Typically our meetings are on the first Thursday of the month, but the first Thursday of next month is January 2. Classes resume January 6, so we might want to change our January board meeting to the second Thursday of the month (January 9).

Action: The Board to change the next meeting date from January 2 to January 9.

UPDATES AND REPORTS

1. New Office in the SAC

Chip reported that our new SAC offices are very nice. We have one room that we will probably use mostly for storage, and one room that we can use as a joint office and storage space. Ileana mentioned that we will need people to help unpack the boxes when they're moved from the shack. Chip has yellow cards for keys to our new offices that he can fill out for interested BoD members after the meeting.

2. Personal Information: Resolution

Heather heard from Parandeh that Parandeh, Sharyn Slavin-Miller, and other administrators met to discuss the personal information issue. They decided that the information would only be given to the Bursar and Registrar in the future, and that it would be directed to the appropriate individuals in these offices. Other offices will no longer get information from the Graduate Office. Chip asked about the availability of a memo stating this policy, and Heather said she would enquire. She will write an article for the Newsletter.

3. Academics Committee

Heather gave the report here, since Lauren is out of town. The format for the teaching awards has changed slightly, and nominations will be solicited at the end of each term. (Hopefully this will increase the number of nominations, as well as nominations for TAs who taught in the first or second terms.) The deadline for nominations is December 9, but an extension will be announced in the Newsletter. Surelys mentioned that the link on the gscacad website to the past winners of the teaching/mentoring awards is broken.

Jeff added that the Everhart Lecture Series has also finished choosing its speakers. Two talks will be scheduled for the second term, and one for the third term. We discussed the option of broadcasting the ELS talks (Denise Nelson-Nash is the contact); it will be free, and the recordings are saved for some time. They did this for the Watson Lectures, for example. The head of the lecture series (Ramesh) should probably follow up on this.

4. Quality of Life Committee

Heather reported that the gscqol website now has a useful section about our health insurance and how to use it. Also, the Quality of Life committee wanted to contact the Safety Office about lab safety (for statistics and general information), as well as CABS about including more inexpensive meal options. There were no objections.

5. Social Committee

Jeff said that the skating night went very well, with about 150 people attending. The Ice-Skating Club and the GSC will host another skating night in February, which will cost another \$500. Surelys asked whether this would be an opportunity to find people interested in organizing more events. There was a sign-up sheet at the skating night; it turns out that it was for the Ice-Skating Club, but perhaps we could make a similar sheet for the Social Committee. Next month there will be a toga party, which Graeme is organizing.

Some people have already been signed up for a catered GSC barbecue or dinner for next term. Jeff feels this will be a good way to get directors and students together, and for us to discuss campus issues with students and get feedback. Surelys suggested that we hold some sort of formal dance, as well. Surelys also suggested hosting an etiquette ball (this is typically an event meant to educate students in formal manners). In the same vein, Ileana mentioned that the Society of Women Engineers had events that helped people choose business wear, and that might be useful on campus. Heather mentioned that the CDC does some of this for its clients and that we might be able to co-host such an event. Jeff mentioned that we will need manpower to implement any ideas.

Also, the Jeopardy! Visit is still on. Stacey Boland is organizing the event. There is supposed to be a chemistry student appearing on Jeopardy! that day, so it will probably be well-attended. If people have not signed up for the event as it approaches, we can send out another email.

6. Housing Committee and CHCC Reports

Steve has contacted John Dundas (ITS) and Rick Canny (Physical Plant) about the estimate for installing Ethernet in the Catalinas, but they haven't replied. Steve covered a little background on the situation: basically, ITS wants Physical Plant to install Ethernet for security reasons, and Physical Plant needed money to provide an estimate. No one informed Linda or the CHCCs that the estimate was being carried out, but the CHCCs spotted likely estimators. No information has been provided. Chip asked about the possibility of providing wireless in the Catalinas, and how useful it would be. John Choi (EE) said that wireless is still not fast enough to make it a good choice for one's only Internet connection. Steve mentioned that he'd wanted to ask the estimators about how much wireless would cost, but it is now too late to incorporate this into the estimate. Surelys asked who paid for the estimate; Steve said Tom Mannion (CABS) had provided the money. Chip thought it would be about \$250K to wire the Catalinas.

The Housing Committee is down to three members, so they are going to try and use the Ethernet issue to recruit some more members. Ideas include creative flyers and a town hall-style meeting about Ethernet.

Steve is now on the faculty housing committee, but no one has contacted him about meetings yet. The housing committee is also keeping an eye on the new fire policy changes, which could affect both on-campus residents (no halogen lights, etc.) and off-campus residents who have things in storage. Explosives (such as small propane cylinders used in camping) could potentially be forbidden, for example. No real news on swing housing yet; presumably the faculty housing committee also deals with this. Steve hadn't heard from Jason regarding their previous meetings.

The CHCC Report:

- Spiderman drew 35-40 people on Nov. 17. The next movie night will be Dec. 15 (movie to be determined).
- The Thanksgiving dinner on Nov. 26 had about eighty people attending. Caltech catering brought extra food this year (after a shortage last year).
- The amplifier in the south rec room has been replaced. There has been no decision on the replacement for the TV in the central rec room.
- The laundry machine card-swipe experiment did not appear by the rumored Thanksgiving deadline, but Linda will keep on them to make sure it is done.

The meeting was adjourned at about 1:20 PM.