

MINUTES

Board of Directors Meeting - Graduate Student Council
Thursday, December 4th, 12:00 – 1:45 pm
Winnett Club Room or Lounge (Above the Bookstore)

Directors Present: Kimberly Beatty, John Bender, Jeff Bergthorson, Stephanie Chow, Heather Cox, Mike Fleming, Surelys Galano, Jon Galownia, Joel Grus, Julie Liu, Marissa Mock, John Murphy, Steve Pracko, Amir Sadjadpour, Karen Smith, Matthew (Chip) Sumner, Alex Tobias, Lauren Webb

Directors Absent: Ileana Carpen, John Choi, Niki Galownia, Ted Harder, Michael Johnson, Catharine Larsen, Alisa Miller, Graeme Smith, Joe Zadeh

Guests: Helen Hasenfeld (Ombuds Office), Fred Romberg (Campus Life)

I. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

A. Call to Order: 12:04 p.m.

B. Modifications to the Agenda

1. Budget Committee (Alex)

The budget committee wanted to bring up payment for survey coding. We will discuss this when we talk about the other survey item already on the agenda.

2. Newsletter Bonus

Marissa pointed out that we forgot to put Steve's newsletter bonus on the agenda. Steve mentioned that the Dean of Graduate Studies wrote an article for the upcoming newsletter.

C. Approval of the October, November meeting Minutes [attached]

Chip has a correction to the November minutes: In the discussion of the bylaw amendments, it is stated that people need to e-mail back to confirm an electronic voting list. However, this was an example and not necessary. For the October minutes, Marissa noticed a correction: Karen Smith, and not Catharine Larsen, is the faculty housing committee member. The October and November minutes were passed with the above corrections: 9 pass, 0 opposed, 5 abstentions.

D. Break for Pizza

The pizza arrived so we had a brief break so people could get their pizza.

E. Introduction of Guests

Marissa introduced Helen Hasenfeld from the Ombuds Office and Fred Romberg, the Senior Administrator of Campus Life. Fred said he was here to get to know the GSC and find out how we work and what we're up to. He's looking at the graduate life component for residential life side, and after the New Year, he will look at other universities and look into other types of graduate student services that are needed.

He will be looking at whether there should be another office called Graduate Life within Campus Life. Someone asked how Fred fits in the hierarchy. Fred responded that he was here to solve problems with a goal of improving student services. He is a Caltech graduate alumnus and works half time at JPL. John M. suggested that Fred write a letter for the GSC newsletter, and Fred responded that he may do so after the holidays.

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. Steering Committee (Marissa Mock)

1. New Compczar

Mike Johnson is stepping down as Compczar after years of excellent service. We need somebody else to volunteer to be Compczar. This involves maintaining our email aliases, posting approved GSC minutes, and maintaining the website (but not updating the website, the Pubs committee is hiring someone for that).

ACTION: Jon Galownia volunteered to be the new Compczar! ☺

2. Move January 8 BoD meeting to 112 Parsons-Gates (first floor conference room)

Suzette Cummings has kindly sponsored us to allow us to reserve the Parsons-Gates Conference room. Other options were less desirable: Avery requires that you buy the food from them, the Brennen conference room also can only be reserved by someone from the building, and the SAC room is slightly smaller and a lot harder to find.

ACTION: It was unanimously passed to move the Jan. 8 BoD meeting to 112 Parsons-Gates.

3. Advertising, IBID, and Gift Money for the GSC/WEST Survey Committee

The joint survey committee would like to ask the GSC to reimburse them for advertising costs (flyers) and fees for ordering research materials through IBID. The committee has recently submitted a MHF application requesting \$1200 to hire someone to analyze the data and prepare graphs for reports, but did not include such “office” expenses in the request. Advertising fees for the whole project (right now, \$40) are not expected to be larger than \$150, and IBID costs (right now, \$15) are not expected to rise above \$50.

We’d also like to buy the 6 members of the survey committee a thank-you gift for their long hours of hard work. We thought a custom mug would be appropriate, and ask for \$50 for the gifts.

Discussion: The fliers are up and there were 500 hits on the website within the first day of the fliers being posted. Currently, there have been 680. Marissa has IBID fees on her personal account. The survey committee received \$1200 from the Moore-Hufstедler Fund (MHF) for data analysis but this does not cover advertising or IBID fees. Heather would also like to request \$50 for mugs. Rather than hosting a party, she prefers that the survey committee members have something lasting and useful. Chip looked into getting mugs in the past and thinks more money might be

useful. Mugs ran ~\$10-12 each. Jeff thinks that we should give \$100 to the survey committee members as a gift.

The budget committee thinks that we should make a retrograde payment for the coding. Marissa ended up putting in a lot of time coding the survey. The survey committee always intended to pay someone for this job. They needed to get the survey out by the end of the year and didn't have time to secure funding before the coding was done. Marissa didn't do the coding on a "volunteer" basis, but did it on the understanding that the coding would be paid for. The survey committee, however, has let the issue of funding for the coding lapse and Heather would like to see it taken care of.

The funds for the survey advertising should come out of the GSC advertising fund. We have \$1000 more in our budget from collecting more dues than we expected to get last year. Alex thinks we have the money to spend on the survey committee. A question was raised as to whether the survey committee thinks it will run into future costs. The MHF money will pay for future data analysis. Other anticipated costs are: if a report is controversial enough, the survey committee will have an open forum to discuss the report and may buy refreshments.

Chip asked whether the survey committee is comfortable with the fact that future data analysis is being paid for but past data analysis has been done on a volunteer basis. The data consultant is being paid \$15/hour. Kim thinks it's reasonable to use the excess \$1000 we have to pay survey committee members for past analyses. Should we give them a gift or pay per report? People think we should give them some sort of money but we should think about guidelines for paying committees. Do we want to think about whether we want to provide these funds? Perhaps the budget committee and those people who are interested should work out guidelines over e-mail. Marissa thinks that any money should be equally distributed among survey committee members. Interested members of the BoD will discuss the matter of paying survey committee members over e-mail and we will talk about it at our next meeting.

ACTION: The advertising funds have already been budgeted so no vote is necessary. It was unanimously passed to approve \$50 for IBID fees.

More discussion about paying volunteers ensued. Questions were raised about whether we should be moving to a model where we pay more for volunteers. However, we have to watch our budget. We also may run into problems where we have to decide that some projects are worth money and others are not. Someone raised the point that this is a volunteer organization and we don't want to move to pay for everything. However, we are seriously undermanned and paying could encourage people to help. As an organization, we can't pay people what they're worth. Perhaps a gift might be a better idea than paying volunteers.

\$150 for the coding work is a number Heather came up with off the top of her head.

ACTION: The board approved \$150 to Marissa for the survey coding with two abstentions. Future discussion of paying the survey committee will take place on the gscbod e-mail alias.

4. Ad hoc Committee on Undergraduate Housing Renovations

Karen Smith has volunteered to be our graduate student rep on the committee recently created by the Faculty Board and charged with investigating issues involved in the renovations of the undergrad houses.

Discussion: The committee has three narrow and specific charges. We asked for a representative and Karen has volunteered. She is our standing faculty housing rep. One of the tasks of the committee is to determine whether faculty should live in the newly renovated houses. Another question they will address is how can Caltech guarantee to potential donors that the housing will be maintained. The third issue the committee will address is what are the problems now that are causing these doubts in donor's minds. They will also discuss issues such as swing housing. Their report is due in January. There is another committee about financial matters that is composed of administrators and not students. The reason the committee is interested in faculty living in student housing is because there was a report in the past and other universities have this system in place. Do faculty want to live in housing? There are probably enough faculty to fill the 7 houses. Will faculty have the potential of getting kicked out? No. In addition, the faculty housing will be nicer than student housing.

ACTION: Karen Smith was approved as our representative with one abstention.

5. Cost of Living Report from the GSC/WEST Survey Committee

The BoD has been given a copy of the next report from the Quality of Life Survey, on the Cost of Living for graduate students. It makes the recommendation that stipend levels be raised to allow all students to pay no more than 30% of their income to housing. We'd like a vote to put the GSC name on the reports.

Discussion: Heather got some comments about the report and appreciated them. She has a final draft but thought it would be better to wait and send out the final report soon than to send it to everyone this morning. We don't want to use our new e-mail voting that we passed at the last board meeting until general counsel has read the bylaws amendments and made sure they're legal.

Going back to some of the previous discussion about compensation for the survey committee, should we give an honorarium to Mike Alvarez, professor in social sciences that helped with the survey? It was decided a nice thank you card would be appropriate.

Heather would prefer to approve the cost of living report over e-mail rather than wait for the next board meeting. It was decided we could do the same model as the last survey reports – 2 days for discussion and 1 day for voting. Kim suggested that we have 2 days for voting. Heather asked that if members don't have time to read the whole report, read at least the recommendations and summary. Heather will send out the new draft as a PDF.

ACTION: It was voted to allow e-mail approval with 2 days of discussion and 2 days of voting. The motion passed with one abstention.

B. Publications (Steve Pracko)

1. Technique Editors

The Publications Committee would like to start the process of selecting Technique editor(s) early. We intend to put out a call in December (outgoing editor Libby Mayo is designing the advertisement) and to have the new editor(s) in place sometime in January. Our timetable will call for a final draft of the text to be in the committee's hands by July 1, so that it can be sent to the printers by August 1 and delivered in time for NSO. We will try to have a recommendation for the new editor(s) by the time of the January BOD meeting.

Discussion: The publications committee is going to pick a new editor soon. We would like to set up deadlines for the new editor. Libby has written up a blurb and suggested 7/1 as a final draft deadline. What kind of deadlines should we have? Do we have control over the money? Last year, we informally asked the Grad Office to pay in installments, but didn't really get back to the Dean. Libby was paid by the Grad Office without asking the GSC. Can we get money transferred to the GSC and then pay the editor ourselves? The Grad Office has resisted this system in the past. However, it would probably be easier for us to leave the money with the Grad Office. Would it be worth having deadlines for chapters? Last year, the committee asked for a better web version and got that. This year, Steve would like to see better editing. We would also like to see a total rewrite of some sections such as jury duty and the Baxter movie series, which no longer exists. There is enough money for the editors, but we need to have better oversight. Steve asked for volunteers to help interview Technique editors

ACTIONS: John Bender, Lauren Webb, and Surelys Galano volunteered to help interview Technique editors.

2. Handbook Status

Steve has asked Ileana to stop working on the handbook and take what she has as the final handbook. The text will be done by the end of December. Someone asked if Steve has asked the Dean's office for funding. He has not yet asked but is planning to do so.

ACTION: Steve updated us on the handbook status.

3. Display Case

We wanted to have the display recessed into the wall, but there is a complication – there are 4x4 steel tubes in that wall but no one knows where the tubes are. An access panel was supposed to be built into the area, but wasn't. They don't want to drill holes into the wall and want to surface mount the case instead of recessing it. The plan was for the case to be 6 feet wide but there might be posts 6 feet apart within the wall although they are unsure.

ACTION: Steve updated us on the display case status.

C. Social Committee (Kimberly Beatty)

Recruit new committee members

Kimberly still needs new members. She did contact the list of potential CHCC applicants before the last social committee meeting but wasn't sure if she gave them enough notice. Someone asked if she's put fliers up in the Catalinas. No, she hasn't because there are not enough people to help here with this. Steph showed up late to the last meeting and Kimberly and Steph missed each other, but otherwise no one else showed up. John M. suggests that Kim advertise a contest where the prize is \$1000 to plan a party. Karen Smith volunteers to be on the committee. Steph and Olga wanted to plan a party for the winter.

ACTION: Kimberly will continue advertising for members and will use John M's idea of a drawing in the next GSC newsletter.

D. Publications Committee (Steve Pracko)

Newsletter Bonus

The Newsletter Editor (Steve Pracko) is paid \$50 per month for preparing the GSC Newsletter. During Steve's tenure as editor, he has helped the Newsletter to grow in both content and quality, making the job significantly harder than when he first began. Recognizing these efforts, the BoD voted to authorize an additional performance-based bonus of \$50 for the Newsletter Editor. Each month, the BoD must vote to decide whether the Editor deserves this bonus for the most recent edition of the Newsletter.

ACTION: Steve's newsletter bonus was passed with one opposed.

E. Steering Committee (Marissa Mock)

DVD Library

ASCIT's DVD library will be open to graduate students in January. Is ASCIT going to advertise it? We should advertise it and maybe they will as well. The latest campus-wide e-mail mentioned it. ASCIT is also holding a DVD poll. We asked them to buy used DVDs. The deadline for the DVD poll is tomorrow.

ACTION: We discussed the DVD library.

F. Quality of Life (Jon Galownia)

The issue of health plans was brought up. We should send out an e-mail soon since the deadlines for medical savings accounts and tax deferred savings expire soon. Human resources misread the laws regarding tax deferred savings and didn't know W-2 wages qualified. For the medical savings plan, money you set aside must be spent on qualified medical expenses. The money is tax-free but must be used up by the end of year or you lose the money. Jon asked Tom Schmitt to publish something about the plans in the GSC newsletter. Medical savings accounts need to be set up soon. Caltech has to legally set them up by December 31st. For months, we've asked HR to communicate this information to graduate students but they haven't. We've not done it ourselves because we don't want to do their work but the deadline is soon. In the e-mail, maybe we should write that if you are eligible and didn't get the e-mail, let HR know about it. A lot of people at the board meeting are interested in the 403B accounts.

ACTION: It was decided that we should send out an e-mail soon to all graduate students about these plans.

G. Housing Committee (Catharine Larsen)

Ethernet in the Catalinas

Catharine's not here, but Steve wanted to tell us that last Monday they started working on installing Ethernet in the Catalinas.

ACTION: Steve updated us on the progress of Ethernet installation in the Catalinas.

III. UPDATES AND REPORTS

A. Steering Committee (Marissa Mock)

Maternity Leave for Graduate Students

The Dean of Graduate Studies recently raised the issue of maternity leave for graduate students at a meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee. He would like to get a policy into the catalog for next year. He believes it should be modeled on the Institute policy for employees, which is 3 months of paid and 3 months of unpaid leave. The option representatives raised a number of important legal issues, e.g., can funding for maternity leave continue to be paid on a government grant? The Dean was charged with coming back to the GSC-II with statistics and answers to their legal concerns.

B. Academics Committee (Jeff Bergthorson)

1. Everhart Lecture Series

We have interviewed the candidates and will be making our selections soon. There will be lectures in the second and third terms. The lectures will be held in Lees-Kubota Lecture Hall (in Guggenheim) and will be webcast.

2. GSC Teaching Awards

Amir and Sherry Suyu of the Academics committee have volunteered to organize these this year. There will be awards for Teaching (faculty), Mentoring, and TA (grad. Students).

3. Lab Reviews:

Should be posted online soon.

4. Course Reviews:

Not too much happening here, need to push with VPSA and Provost to get institute to implement this system.

5. Workshop

Workshop - "How to deal effectively with your advisor" - will be held in late January or so. The Ombuds office and CDC have agreed to help out with planning and funding.

C. Bylaws (Chip Sumner)

Review of Amendments

The Bylaws Committee is working with Caltech's Office of General Counsel (OGC) to make sure that the Bylaws amendments that were approved by the Board at last month's meeting are consistent with the laws governing corporations. They are also willing to help us clarify a couple of sections of the Bylaws that we do not fully understand.

H. Publications (Steve Pracko)

1. Technique

Paper copies are here and have been distributed to first year grad students. Additional copies are available from the grad office, presumably on a first-come, first-served basis, although no official announcement has been made. The web version is online, and Libby is making some changes in response to feedback from the committee (site maps for each chapter, for example). She would also like to add more images to the online version.

2. Display Case

We have been talking to Elvin Nixon from Architectural and Engineering Services about the GSC display case. It looks promising that we should be able to get everything we want, with one possible complication. There are steel support tubes in the wall where we want to recess the case, so we may have to go smaller than the originally planned 6' (only down to 5'8", not too bad). However, we can't be sure of that until they identify exactly where the tubes are.

3. GSC web site

At the last Publications meeting, Libby mentioned a friend who might be well-suited for redesigning the GSC web site, as this person has some graphic design experience and would probably be willing to work in our price range (~\$500). We will get in touch with this person and explain to her what we would like to do. At the same time, we will ask the Caltech Electronic Media Publications people what they can provide for us in terms of the long-promised server storage space and scripting options.

4. Image Bank

Rescued from the back burner, we would again like to set up a system for grad students and other Caltech personnel to submit photos and other images for use in GSC publications. Previous discussions with the people in charge of the Caltech PR photo bank suggested the need to come up with a release/permission form for both the photographer and GSC to sign so that there are no legal problems later. This would allow the GSC to use a photo while allowing the owner to retain all the copyrights if he or she chooses to use it for commercial purposes later on. We should probably ask the PR people for more detailed advice before proceeding.

D. Social Committee (Kimberly Beatty)

Cooking Lesson

There were only six people at the cooking lesson. Jane Curtis (planner) would like help getting a larger group for the Valentine's cooking lesson.

E. Quality of Life (Jonathan Galownia)

1. Health Insurance

We will have met with Tom Schmitt from HR on Tuesday, November 25th to discuss the way in which graduate students are treated by HR, specifically concerning health insurance.

2. Lab Safety

We met with Caz from the safety office. We have asked Margo for a meeting with her, Caz, and Jennifer Sorenson, who was also present at the safety meeting. Details can be found in QoL's most recent minutes. In summary, Caz believes in the ideal he has set up at the office and is willing to make small changes and improvements to the program. He does not feel that it is necessary to make sweeping changes to deal with the problem of inadequate safety in labs.