

# Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting - Graduate Student Council  
Thursday, November 4th, 2004, 12:00 – 1:45 pm  
Winnett Club Room (Above the Red Door)

**Directors Present:** Deniz Armani, John Bender, Alex Brown, Will Ford, Marco Latini, Laurence Loumes, Andrea Martin, Amir Sadjadpour, Emily Schaller, Graeme Smith, Min Tao, Catherine Ward, Jennifer Witman, Laurence Yeung

**Directors Absent:** Justin Boland, Alexei Dvoretzskii, Jonathan Galownia, Niki Galownia, Sidharth Jaggi, Eugene Mahmoud, Tosin Otitoju, Matthew 'Chip' Sumner

**Guests:** Steve Pracko (grad student), Lisa Taneyhill (President of Postdoc Association), Edoardo Marcora (Italian Club), Xin Lin (grad student), Harmony Gate (grad student), Eva Murdock (Caltech Y), Jerry Houser (Career Center)

## I. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

- A. **Amir called the meeting to order at 12:06**
- B. **Introduction of Guests-**Lisa introduced herself. She is a postdoc in biology and the chair of the postdoc association. She is looking for opportunities for the postdoc association to collaborate with the GSC. Harmony was present to observe. Edoardo is the president of the Italian Club and is also a postdoc in biology. Xin is a student in CDS. The board introduced themselves.
- C. **Modifications to the Agenda-**Edoardo is here to ask for funding for the Italian code.
- D. **The October meeting minutes were approved**

## II. ACTION ITEMS

- A. **Steering Committee (Amir Sadjadpour)**
  - 1. Announce Change in Secretary  
Due to some personal issues, Jenny Witman needs to step down from the board. Emily Schaller has agreed to serve as secretary in her place. She will start this role in late November.  
**ACTION:** The board thanked Emily for taking on this role.
  - 2. Lunches with VP Margo Marshak  
The BoD (Board of Directors) has lunch with the Vice-President of Student Affairs Margo Marshak once a month. This month's lunch will be Monday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> in Parsons-Gate 112. If you plan to attend this lunch RSVP to Emily.  
**ACTION:** Meeting was announced
  - 3. Career Center Workshop on Negotiating your Salary  
We would like to find the best way to advertise a workshop on negotiation.

Lisa Taneyhill, the chair of the postdoc association is attending our meeting, this month and we would like to hear from her about the possible opportunities to have collaborations with each other in future. Examples would be the negotiation workshop, joint social hours, mentoring program and international student/scholars visa issues. In our meeting with the BoD of PostDoc Association today, it was suggested to have a volunteer to sit in their career committee and we would need one of the board members to volunteer to be there. One of the ideas that we have is a panel of postdocs to discuss 'Surviving Grad School'.

Another topic that has been brought up is a workshop on negotiating your salary. Andrea said that she had spoken with Jerry Houser in the career center. He already holds workshops and seminars on this topic. Lisa felt that we might be able to better advertise these events. Deniz said that they were well advertised at the career center. Lisa asked what else we might be interested in. Andrea thought that the mentorship program was excellent. Lisa said that this was actually coordinated through the women's center. Graeme asked if there was a job talk seminar. Lisa responded that the postdoc association was already doing this. Lisa said that the programming of the postdoc association was well attended by graduate students.

Catherine asked who was going to attend the postdoc career committee meeting on Friday. Min asked what the meeting was for. Lisa explained the purpose of the committee. Min volunteered to attend. Lisa asked for us to continue to communicate via e-mail. Graeme suggested that the social chairs also get together. **ACTION:** Min volunteered to attend the postdoc association career committee meeting.

#### 4. December 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting

The December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting is scheduled for the week after Thanksgiving. Will people be available to attend? Should we change the date?

Andrea felt that it was better than holding the meeting over Christmas break. John said that this was the last week of classes.

**ACTION:** The meeting remained at the same time.

#### 5. Italian club funding- Addition to the Agenda

Edoardo is the president of Italian club. They weren't able to apply for club funding for various reasons. They hold monthly Italian movie nights in the Beckman Institute Auditorium. The attendance is 30-40 people with 1/3 to 1/2 being grad students. The cost for these events is a reception before the movies. This is the club members primary way to meet as they don't hold monthly meetings. They also collaborate with the international film club. They are requesting funding on the order of \$500-\$600.

Emily asked if there was funding from other sources. Edoardo replied that there wasn't. In the past they had asked for a \$5.00 per member for the movie night but this didn't work well. In addition to the movies the club also has a new weekly Italian conversation table.

Marco asked how they advertised. Edoardo replied that they sent an e-mail to their member list and also posted events on their web page. Alex asked if they would post fliers if asked and Edoardo replied that he would.

At this point Deniz asked if we should ask the Italian club to submit a budget instead of approving this ad hoc at the meeting. Marco and Graeme felt that this was fine. Alex said that this was the current way that funding was requested. Deniz asked how this would be accounted for in the budget. Alex replied that it would be a line item in the budget. John asked if we had the money and Alex replied that we did.

Catherine called for a vote, with the condition that the club submit a budget. Emily asked that they also post fliers. Edoardo said that he would but asked where he could post fliers. Amir said that posting them on boards in the Cataline would be a good idea. Alex said that the club could post events on our website. John pointed out that they should have a bartender for the event. He said that the graduate office would provide one free of charge according to the Caltech alcohol policy. Emily suggested that we provide \$50 for advertising. Alex thought that \$25 was sufficient. Marco suggested that we also send a notice to our e-mail list.

**ACTION:** Amir called for a vote. The Italian club funding was approved at \$600 plus \$25 for fliers. Min pointed out that they need to submit a budget.

#### 6. Report on Meeting about Housing at Caltech (Steve Pracko)

Short report on the meeting with Tim Change, Kim Border, and Dean Hoffman by Justin Boland. (Steve Pracko presented this information in Justin's absence)

- designated family housing
- no priority list
- how to handle need-based housing?
- length of housing contracts
- currently housing ~50% of Caltech grad students
- how to get more housing

Steve pointed out that a suggestion that is probably going to be inacted is to set aside off campus housing for married students with families. However who would be eligible is not well defined. Andrea said that this would be the off campus rental properties. Marco asked if this housing was sponsored by Caltech. Steve said that Caltech housing is independent of the Institute. Andrea said that you would pay more for an equivalent apartment in the community. John point out that there wasn't equivalent housing off campus. Laurence asked about the lottery. Steve said that they don't hold the lottery for off campus housing.

Xin lives in a leased property. She said that there was currently three priority groups- family's with children, students whose spouses are not eligible to work and then single students. She had received a letter that the lease would now be a two year lease with the rent the same. After that time the rent will increase by 10% per year. Andrea said that this rent increase was working to make the price paid by students more fair as some students pay much more than others. John pointed out that this was the way it worked in the 'real world'. Laurence L. asked about the current waiting list. Steve said that it would be sorted by date to make things more equitable. John asked at this point why we were discussing this.

Steve felt that this spoke to the cost of living issue- particularly for the married students. Andrea said that if all the leased properties were used as family housing that all married students with children could be housed.

John suggested that we bring this up with Margo at the next meeting. He felt that they should either stop raising the rent or increase the stipends to compensate. Andrea felt that a stipend raise was more equitable as some students live off campus. Min said that the international office advertised that each dependent added \$4000 to the cost of living. She thought that this number may need to be increased. She felt that the graduate office should be asked to change this publication and make the issue known. If Caltech can guarantee housing for graduate students with dependents that would help.

Steve said that Dean Hoffman said that students should negotiate their stipend with their advisors on an ad hoc basis as the final salary was determined by the advisor. Andrea said that this placed the students in a very awkward position. Steve said that unlike a job, students couldn't really leave the institute so negotiation was difficult. Marco asked what the Dean's response was to this. Steve said that he said that the faculty were also making sacrifices as they didn't receive raises last year.

Catherine said that these issues were being brought up in conversations about selecting the new Dean. Deniz felt that we needed to find a median that can be struck to help the students. Steve and John pointed out that the dean sends out a memo with recommendations for stipends. Catherine said that the chemical engineers had a stipend raise. Evidently there was a problem in the ACM pay roll recently. John asked again what action we should take. Steve said that the issue is something that the housing committee would be working on. Amir said that we will bring up this point with Margo. Deniz said that there should be some institute policy. The current system felt like a black box to him. Steve said that the institute did not have a cost of living survey for Pasadena. Deniz asked if we should do a survey to make it official. Min asked if we should do a survey. John pointed out that this was on the survey that was done the previous year, but the administration didn't act on the recommendations. Steve said that he would sit down with the housing committee and see what recommendations they could make.

**ACTION:** Amir said that we would have further discussion via e-mail and bring up this topic with Margo Marshak at the next meeting.

#### 7. NSO Event Organizers

Justin will send out descriptions of the NSO events written in the past. Please update them to reflect this year's events.

**ACTION:** Announcement was made.

#### 8. Recruit volunteer to coordinate for the GSC retreat

Amir said that there hadn't been a retreat the previous year as Capo ranch had been sold just as the retreat was scheduled. Graeme voted to cancel the retreat. John said that this wasn't a good idea. Marco asked what is normally done on a retreat. John said that the board did planning and team building activities. He felt it was very useful. Graeme said he didn't think it was useful. It was stated that the administration had a fund set aside for retreats. Deniz jokingly pointed out that if we took money from the administration it might be a conflict of interest.

Amir said that Chip had found it very useful even though initially people weren't interested. John said that it was important that it be very organized. Graeme felt that we should apply our limited organizational energy directly to the students. Jerry asked if this was something that the grad office could help with. John said that the important part of the planning needed to be done by a member of the BoD. John said that unless someone steps up this event was going to happen.

Marco asked if Jerry could help with planning how to sort out our goals. Jerry said that he could facilitate a discussion and a SWAT analysis.

**ACTION:** Marco volunteered to organize the retreat and Alex volunteered to help.

#### 8. Connecting with the Caltech Y

Eva Murdock, the president of the Caltech Y's student ExComm, will speak with us about ways that the GSC can be involved with the Caltech Y.

She described her purpose for meeting as:

The purpose of my visit is kind of two-fold: first, I want to make both new and old members of the BoD aware of exactly what and how much the Y does--many people only arrive at the Y through a specific activity, be it community service, the Y-Outdoors list, Caltech Votes, or whatever. The Y is in fact a nearly-a-century-old nonprofit organization, complete with a Board of Directors and a permanent staff, as well as a student executive committee that oversees more than just co-sponsorship allotment. Secondly, I want to check in and make sure that everyone is aware that the vast majority of Caltech Y programming, events, and leadership opportunities are open to both undergraduates and grads--opportunities including starting and leading your own community service project, eating hamburgers at Decompression at the end of the term, bringing prominent speakers to campus to talk about issues that concern you, and even (especially!) being on the Student Executive Committee of the Y, the ExComm, which strives for a balance of grad/undergrad input (which is crucial if you consider that 1/4-1/3 of our total participation is made up of grads already).

She said that the Y had three branches- community service, cultural activities and an outdoor branch. The outdoor branch has equipment available for renting. The community service holds weekly events.

Marco asked where the funding for the Y came from. Eva said that they received funding for the Y from the institute, endowment and donations from friends, the rest from students dues. The dues were only used for things that went directly back to the students. Some specific events were funded by the GSC. Amir said that there were many overlapping events and invited a member of the Y to join the social committee. Eve said that we were also invited to their Monday lunch meetings (From noon to 1pm).

Graeme asked if the Y invited the bands that played outside the red door, as they weren't very popular. Laurence said that they were too loud.

Jerry said that it was very helpful to have graduate students involved in activities such as the alternate spring break trip and Make a difference day. Eva said that grad students were welcome at decompression. Amir asked the web czar to publish these events on the web calendar.

**ACTION:** An invitation was extended by Eva to the board to join their meetings or committees.

### **Publications Committee (John Bender)**

#### 1. ASCIT DVD Library Drop-box Funding

I finally followed up with Galen Loram, and he said they recently jumped at the chance to save us some money by purchasing a drop-box for \$300 instead of the \$1000 originally estimated (which we had preliminarily agreed to). So, we owe ASCIT approximately \$300. The Pubs Committee will pursue an agreement with ASCIT for the GSC to fund continuing graduate student usage of the DVD library (which agreement, of course, will be subject to final BoD approval).

Graeme asked if this was in addition to the fee that we were going to pay to use the library. John said that the fee hadn't been negotiated yet. Alex said that we need a vote to approve this expenditure. Amir said that we should send an e-mail announcement. Harmony suggested that this include the code for the SAC.

**ACTION: Approved ~\$300 to ASCIT for a DVD library drop-box.**

#### 2. GSC Newsletter Editor Needed

The current *GSC Newsletter* editor, John Bender, has expressed a desire to move on, and has decided that the December issue will be his last. The topic of a new editor was discussed at the last Pubs Committee meeting, and no one there (John and Steve) wanted to take the position. However, Jon and Niki were nominated as a team, and the nomination was seconded.

John said that approving Jon and Niki was a joke, however it was necessary to find someone else to do it. Marco asked why John didn't want to continue. Andrea said that she would do it. John asked for a vote to approve Andrea since she would be paid.

**ACTION: The board approved Andrea as the new Newsletter editor. The position pays \$100 per month, and requires approximately 20 hours per month.**

#### 3. GSC Email List Policy

The frequency of GSC emails to the graduate student body has been extremely high of late. This is a problem because our policy has been not to allow graduate students to opt out of our email list, on the assumption that we would only send important and relevant information. Many feel that the information we have been sending lately is neither. It is perhaps time to revisit this policy, or at least make some guidelines for how we use the list to improve our service to students.

This is somewhat related to the issue of choosing a Newsletter Editor. The CPA (postdoc association) newsletter is an opt-in email, with content similar to what we've been sending to students recently (also similar to what goes in our newsletter). One course of action would be to change our newsletter to an email like this, and allow students to opt into receiving it.

As a non-profit California corporation, we are required to have a way to contact all of our shareholders (every graduate student, in this case). Our policy has been that our email list is complete and therefore fulfills this requirement, but that will not be the case if we start allowing students to opt out. (Or such is my understanding of the law and our bylaws.) The Dean has supported us in this position.

The Pubs Committee briefly discussed this and put together a few guidelines to direct this conversation. The definition of “critical” is somewhat deliberately vague (in true GSC fashion) to allow future BoDs leeway for situations we cannot currently envision. We also toyed with the idea of adding a time window (e.g., only one email can be sent every two weeks), but decided not to for much the same reason.

- the GSC must have a reliable method of communication with all members (grad students)
- email is currently used; if we allow students to opt off our list, we have to send paper
- non-critical use of this list should be eliminated
- critical use is defined as:
  - = items that can only be sent by the GSC, or that no other entity is willing to send in a timely fashion (e.g., last year’s health care announcement)
  - = items critical to the operation of the GSC, or critical to graduate student life
- Chair should send, as now
- all emails should be professional quality, therefore proofread by at least one person other than the Chair

Jenny asked about sending notices out through the Caltech directory. Jerry said that the career center maintained two lists, one for all students and one that the students could opt out of. Jenny was concerned about the e-mail being overused. Min suggest that we both limit the number of e-mails and allow students to opt out but once a year.

Andrea will take on the responsibility of maintaining the e-mail lists. Amir said that he included a newsletter announcement with every e-mail that was sent out. When asked if the newsletter was still important John replied that they contained different information. Amir said that GUSH reminders were important to send out by e-mail.

John suggested that if we were maintaining two lists that once a week was not too often to send e-mails to students. E-mails should only be sent if they were in the interest of the GSC. Steve added that the message board outside the Red Door was finally close to being installed.

Amir felt that if we fund it we should send out a notice. John asked that all messages be proof read by the publications committee to maintain their professional quality. While the president should send out most announcements, Justin as executive director can send out announcements in his absence.

**ACTION:** This new policy was adopted:

The GSC will maintain two e-mail lists, one of which includes all students with no opt out options, one of which will allow for students to opt out. The first list will be used to meet our obligations to contact all members for special activities, specifically

notification about the annual meeting and publication of the annual report. The second list will receive an e-mail once a week at the same time every week that will contain information that is in the GSC's interest. There will be a separate e-mail sent once a month that notifies students on the second list of the publication of the newsletter.

**B. Housing Committee (Interim Chair: Steve Pracko)**

1. Housing Committee Chair

We still need to find a BOD member willing to serve as the new permanent chair of the Housing Committee. We do not require a BOD vote to approve a new chair; this is simply a call for interested directors to identify themselves. The Housing Committee can make the final decision at its next meeting.

**ACTION:** Call for volunteers to join the Housing Committee/run for Housing Chair.

2. Campus Lighting Survey

The Housing Committee has once again been invited to participate in the campus lighting survey, scheduled for late November. The purpose of the survey is to identify areas of campus where lighting should be improved for safety/security reasons and where additional emergency phones should be installed. If you know of any problem areas now, please inform the Housing Committee.

Amir asked if this included classrooms. Andrea replied that the main purpose was security for the students and to keep them from getting mugged.

**ACTION:** Send lighting/emergency phone suggestions to the Housing Committee.

**C. Underrepresented Students Committee (Min Tao)**

1. H-1B Visa/Green card application seminar

We contacted a local law firm (Scott Warmuth LLC.) to hold a free immigration seminar for international students to meet their need in job application at this recruiting season. The seminar is possibly held in mid-November.

Min said that there were many changes in the last two years to immigration policy. The firm had spoken at a Caltech C event before and was very good. Graeme suggested that she coordinate with the ISP. Alex said that she doesn't need funding as she can use the US committee discretionary funds. Amir said that the discretionary funds were for the purpose of getting more students to attend meetings. Andrea suggested advertising through the career center and ISP.

**ACTION:** The board approved a possible budget of \$50 for refreshment. The firm will probably provide the budget for this.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:54. Min distributed tee shirts.

### **III. UPDATES AND REPORTS**

**A. Publications Committee (John Bender)**

1. Technique Editor

It's time again to select an editorial team for the *Technique*. This year's editors, Julie Fry and Wendy Bittner, have expressed interest in doing it again, but we'll have to run a full search anyway. They have done a great job and therefore probably have an edge, but the GSC's "paid positions" policy and good ethics dictate that we have to advertise the position to the student body before hiring anyone.

One confounding factor is that ASCIT still hasn't contacted us to dialogue about combining the *Technique* with the *little t* like we talked about this summer. This could greatly change what we want from the *Technique* editors, so we should figure this out first. Hopefully this will happen before the end of the year.

## **B. Social Committee (Graeme Smith)**

### 1. Gradiators

Gradiators was a success -- six teams and a whole lot of fun. Our next big project is a term party in late November/early December.

## **C. Quality of Life (Jonathan Galownia)**

### 1. Food Services

We met with Tom Mannion at Citrus to discuss the Chandler renovation and other topics. Chandler will have a larger grill with more options, roughly twice to four times the current asian selection, two times as large salad bar and the latino line will be reintroduced with pricing by weight. It should also be quicker to run in and grab food. The renovations have started, but the outside addition will not begin until February. Chandler will then be closed for about 10 weeks. The plan during this time for graduate students is not known.

Chandler offers a 10% discount for graduate students between 11am – 12pm. We decided this should be advertised more widely.

### 2. Halaal Food

Tom is willing to try a dinner and talk with Heidar Baba about introducing its food to Caltech. However, there are many legal issues that must be taken care of, and this might be cost prohibitive. Tom thinks better advertisement or adaptation of the current system will result in a better solution. We are looking into what is currently available and will gather feedback from students via the newsletter.

### 3. Health Center

We have not yet heard back from Kevin Austin about the follow-up survey. The new login system works well. Privacy is greatly increased.

### 4. Health Insurance

We are meeting with Angelica Santana and the Chickering representatives again this Tuesday. We will discuss general health insurance information. If you have any feedback or comments, please email them to QoL.

## **D. Housing Committee (Interim Chair: Steve Pracko)**

### 1. Family Housing and Cost-of-Living

The recent decision to eliminate the priority group system from Caltech lease property assignments has caused much concern among graduate students with families. The Housing Committee has done our best to explain how the decision came about, especially the legal issues and the involvement of Caltech's OGC. These students would like to know what accommodations, if any, can be made for those who have to support spouses/partners, children, or other dependents.

The Housing Committee talked with a number of married students at our October monthly meeting. One suggestion that was made, and which the Housing Office seems inclined to implement, is to set aside a number of properties as "married student only" housing—we believe this would avoid problems of discrimination, as married and single students would not be competing for the same apartments.

However, our meeting also led into a discussion of the root problem: the affordability of housing for all graduate students. The lease properties are not popular because they are great places to live (we have heard about a number of maintenance problems); they are popular because they are cheap and until recently were guaranteed housing throughout a student's time at Caltech. Finding non-Caltech housing for a couple or a family that is affordable on a graduate student's stipend is prohibitively challenging, and it is difficult for single students as well. We feel Caltech needs to be more actively engaged in monitoring cost-of-living and taking appropriate steps. Although money is tight both for Housing and for the Institute, the alternative is to lose top researchers because Caltech is viewed as not doing enough to support its students.

By the time of the BOD meeting, members of the Housing Committee should have met with the Housing Office and Caltech officials, including VP Marshak, Dean Hoffmann, and Professor Border (chair of the Faculty Student Housing Committee), to urge them to move Caltech into a more active posture on this topic.

### 2. Catalina Ethernet

It's done! Ethernet is up and running in the Catalinas.

## **D. Underrepresented Students Committee (Min Tao)**

### 1. Polo shirts arrived

GSC Polo shirts ordered from Stitch America have arrived. The shipment includes 12 male and 13 female shirts. They will be distributed in this BoD meeting.

### 2. Dependents health insurance help

QoL currently have experts and rich resource in dependents health insurance plans. We went to their committee meeting and discussed the issue. They are going to put together updated information on their webpage and Matthew Cook will prepare an email to all students covering the information.

### 3.Task Force on Gender issue

We met with Candace from Women's center and Helen from Ombuds Office to discuss the situation and possible solutions. No practical solutions seem to be implemented yet. We emphasized on educating campus (both faculty and staff's side and students' side) to create a healthy environment for scientific work and individuals to be respectful and responsible researchers. Discussion with other organizations and student bodies will be held as next step.