

AGENDA

Board of Directors Meeting - Graduate Student Council
Thursday, March 3rd, 2005, 12:00 – 1:45 pm
Winnett Club Room (Above the Red Door)

Directors Present: Jonathan Galownia, Emily Schaller, Catherine Ward, Min Tau, Laurence Yeung, Alexei Dvoretzkii, Laurence Loumes, Scott Miserendino, Justin Boland, Stacey Boland, Amir Sadjadpour, Graeme Smith, Arthur Fitzmaurice, Alex Brown, Aditya Khair, Rafael Verduzco, John Bender, Chip Sumner, Neena Kadaba, Xin Liu, Eugene Mahmoud, Niki Galownia, Will Ford

Guests: Chris A. Alabi – graduate student, Jane Curtis – Health Educator, Mostafa El-Khamy, Daniel Cleary – graduate students, Andrew Kositsky- undergraduate Student, Steve Pracko – graduate student

I. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

- A. The meeting was called to order**
- B. Everyone briefly introduced themselves**
- C. Modifications to the Agenda**

1. A safety item was added to the agenda by Mostafa El-Khamy
2. Several new directors handed in their forms making them officially able to vote in this meeting

- D. The board voted to approve the February minutes**

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. Steering Committee (Amir Sadjadpour)

1. Lunch with VP Margo Marshak Monday March 28th

ACTION: The meeting was announced

2. A safety concern was brought to the attention of the board by Mustafa. He noted that people tend to cross Wilson street in the middle away from any crosswalks near the north cats. He suggests that a pedestrian crosswalk near the north cats analogous to the crosswalk near Holliston street would be useful.

Justin proposed an alternate solution – a speed bump. He noted that there have been 15 accidents since he's lived there. He noted that people don't always respect a crosswalk very well so a speed bump might be a better alternative.

ACTION: Jon will email parking security transportation and the issue was passed off to the quality of life committee.

3. Rafael brought up the issue that the South Field is in very bad shape. The board decided that this would be a good issue to bring up with VP of Student Affairs Margo Marshak.

4. Recruit new members!

Many current board members are graduating this year – we need to replace them.

ACTION: Board members were urged to talk to their lab/office mates

5. Weekly Student Affairs socials hosted by VP Marshak (Steve Pracko)

ACTION: Board members were urged to consider attending these events on Wednesdays at 4PM

B. Budget Committee (Alex Brown)

1. Caltech Y Proposals

The budget committee has received proposals from the Caltech Y on two of their programs, Alternative Spring Break and Make a Difference Day. The GSC budget committee recommends we approve these programs.

ACTION: The board approved \$2500 to be allocated to the Caltech Y for these events

2. Semena Latina

Semena Latina has asked the GSC to sponsor their event at \$1500. They asked this amount last year and were unable to receive all funds due to their late notice. This year their notice is late, but we do have funding for them. The GSC budget committee suggests we fund \$1500.

There was some concern about how we can insure that budget requests are submitted on time. Alexei noted that one problem is that the forms are due on September 1st when many students are not here.

ACTION: The board voted to approve the addition of a budget item for Semena Latina sponsorship at \$1500. The request was approved with 2 against and 1 abstention.

3. Ruddock House Party

Ruddock House has requested the GSC sponsor their party on March 5 at \$500. This amount is the same as last year. The budget committee suggests we fund them \$250. Andrew estimated that 300 graduate students would be at the party. He said that the additional \$250 is for unanticipated things. Chip asked what the total budget is for the event. The total budget is \$4500. Chip estimated that only 100 grad students attended the party last year. John noted that they could apply for quickfunding if they determined they really needed the additional \$250. It is not our policy to give money to cover additional unanticipated costs.

ACTION: The board voted to fund Ruddock House party at \$250. A vote was taken to allocate \$500 to this event but it was not approved.

C. Publications Committee (John Bender)

1. Display Case

The GSC display case outside the Red Door is weeks away from becoming reality. Many thanks to Steve Pracko, official Pubs Committee Supreme Overachiever.

ACTION: The Pubs Committee will draft a usage policy and guidelines at their next meeting. Justin suggested that ideas could be solicited by email.

2. Graduate Student Handbook Editor Job Description

The Pubs Committee has formulated a job description for an editor for the Graduate Student Handbook (calendar). We would like to hire an editor very soon.

ACTION: The Handbook Editor's job description (attached) was approved with one vote against.

D. Bylaws (Chip Sumner)

1. List of Questions for OGC

Caltech's Office of General Counsel (OGC) has generously offered to provide us with legal guidance to help us better understand the GSC's responsibilities under our Bylaws, as well as the requirements of state and federal law. Alexei and Chip are in the final stages of pulling together a list of issues, including both general questions that have been raised by the Board during its meetings and specific inquiries regarding certain sections of our Bylaws.

We would like to get the Board's feedback and approval before sending the list to OGC, and we need to decide what mechanism should be used.

ACTION: The Board will review and approve the questions before they are sent to OGC over email. Chip will initiate the discussion over email.

E. GRB (Sidharth Jaggi & Catherine Ward)

1. Bylaws committee

The GRB is considering convening a bylaws committee to examine our bylaws and suggest changes.

The role of the GRB was discussed. It was noted that changes to the GRB bylaws are difficult and that there is some semantic procedural issues that might need to be changed.

F. Social Committee (Graeme Smith)

1. At the most recent social committee meeting, we discussed possible events and projects that could be organized. The following are our recommendations:

1. GSC Sponsored biweekly ½ hour Massages.

Jane Curtis had this idea, which grew out of the "Fine Tune Your Body and Mind" class -- Having a massage therapist come to campus on a regular basis to give free (or possibly heavily subsidized) ~1/2 hour massages to grad students. The women's center does something

like this (they hire a MT every 2 weeks for 2 hours, giving 10 minute chair massages, I think), but the idea is to specifically address graduate students and give a more comprehensive service.

She says the MT would cost ~ \$60/hr so I'm guessing this would have a price tag around \$2000-3000 for a year. While this may seem like a lot, it is comparable to what we spend each year on any one of : 3 term parties, the wine trip, 4 rugby parties, and the Caltech Y events. I think this would provide something for a set of people we typically don't reach with the events I just listed, or at least reach the same people in a different way.

Stacey noted that the women's center massages have brought people into the women's center and that this can have nice trickle down effects for people attending other events there.

Justin thought that maybe 15 minute appointments with the option for 2 in a row would be better than 30 minute appointments.

Chip said that \$30-40 per person seems a lot of money to spend.

Alexei asked how signup is handled.

Jane said that it is on her website. She said that the massages would be for April to September

Alexei said that the GSC funding this might generate backlash. It was noted that it is important to emphasize that massages provide a health benefit.

Min said that we could put other things together as a package and have them under the same umbrella.

Jon said that we need to make sure that we take this opportunity.

Steve said that we should evaluate it after 6 months with feedback.

Alexei asked Jane if she had plans for how to get it funded past 6 months.

Jane explained that his was a pilot program and that it feeds into mental health series.

Sid noted that only a small fraction of the grad student population will have the chance to do this.

Justin noted that this is a pilot program.

ACTION: The board voted to allocate ~\$2880 for massage therapist. The measure was approved with 2 against.

2. GSC Oral Presentation Brown-Bag Workshop

This project is less well developed than the others. The idea is to organize a ~ 4 session workshop covering the basics of giving a scientific talk. A specialist would come in to lead the sessions once a week for a month, around lunch time, likely some time in April. There would be a different focus each week, with an attempt to make the sessions somewhat independent:

Preparation: How to structure a talk, choosing content; Delivery: How to beat the butterflies and develop a stage presence; Practicum: participants bring an introduction to a talk that they've prepared for a [hopefully vicious!] critique.)

Talks on this topic sponsored by CPET have been quite popular, so Graeme would like to consult with them on a potential speaker. Obviously the structure of the sessions will depend a lot on their size, and he may possibly restrict the size to ~20 people.

ACTION: Fund \$800 – 4x150 for Honorariums to speaker, 4x50 for refreshments. The board unanimously approved this allocation.

3. Monthly cooking lessons.

The GSC currently has \$500 in the budget each year to fund cooking lessons to grad students, organized by Jane Curtis. In the past this has been enough to fund ~ 3-4 lessons per year. Jane has offered to offer these lessons on a monthly basis, if we can provide the funding.

Graeme doesn't have a concrete number right now, but his guess is that we can have a monthly cooking lesson for the rest of the year for \$500-800 of extra funding. He'd like to ask for enough to sustain the monthly cooking lessons.

Each cooking lesson is ~\$240 for a total of \$1440. About 15 people attend each month. The lessons are on Tuesday 5-7PM and Saturday 10AM-noon.

Alexei asked if the same 15 people attend every month.

Jane said that a total of 80-100 different people have attended.

This will be advertised in the GSC newsletter.

ACTION: The Board unanimously approved to allocate up to \$1440 for further cooking lessons, with the final number to be approved by the Budget Committee.

G. QoL/Compczar (Jonathan Galownia)

1. Replace the computer czar

Jon will not be able to continue as computer czar in April. We need to find a replacement.

ACTION: Will volunteered to be the new compczar

2 New QoL Chair

Jon will no longer be able to serve as QoL Chair in April. We should find a temporary or acting chair as soon as possible. Marco Latini has expressed interest.

III. UPDATES AND REPORTS

A. Publications Committee (John Bender)

1. Technique Editors

Andrea Martin and Deniz Armani have been selected as the 2005-06 editors of the *Technique*.

2. Job Description for Handbook Editor

Summary

The Handbook Editor is responsible for making sure that the information contained in the Caltech Graduate Student Handbook (calendar/planner) is accurate and complete. The Handbook Editor shall finish updating and editing and submit a final version to the Graduate Office in time for publication and distribution before New Student Orientation.

Updating

The Handbook Editor should delegate responsibility for the information content of the sections to the appropriate GSC committees. One way to do this is to send a few of the previous year's sections to an appropriate committee and ask the committee to verify the accuracy and completeness of the information. The committee will be responsible for making any changes to the content of the sections assigned to them. The Handbook Editor will be responsible for receiving the updated information from the committees. The Handbook Editor may suggest to the committees that entire sections be added or deleted, as necessary.

Editing

The Handbook Editor shall scrutinize the entire content of the handbook, both old and new, for length, accuracy, and completeness. This includes verifying all phone numbers, email addresses, web addresses, office hours, dates, etc., as well as reading for style, spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. The publisher sets limits on total allowable length.

Compensation

The Handbook Editor will be paid \$500 from the Graduate Office upon satisfactory completion of the new edition of the handbook, as approved by the GSC.

B. Housing Committee (Acting Chair: Steve Pracko)

1. Family Housing

The Housing Office has raised questions regarding the feasibility of the plan the Housing Committee has proposed for housing graduate students with families. As a

reminder, we asked to have a number of 2-bedroom apartments set aside with a 5-year limit on residency, including the option to reapply at the end of those five years. However, the Housing Office has indicated that the size of demand for such properties is sufficiently large that we will ultimately wind up in a similar situation as existed before, with the size of the waiting list roughly equivalent to the number of families who are actually living in the housing.

One complicating factor is that obtaining an accurate count of students with children is (apparently) difficult. The committee discussed family housing with VP Marshak at a meeting on February 28. She indicated that many people at Caltech have taken an interest in this subject (for both students and postdocs), and she will propose the formation of committee, headed by a faculty member, to investigate and address the issue.

In addition, the Housing Committee and a number of interested graduate students with children will be meeting with the Housing Office this Friday.

2. Cost of Living

At our meeting with VP Marshak, the committee raised the topic of the availability of affordable housing for graduate students. We feel it is crucial that Caltech annually collect data related to the cost of living, particularly in light of the wide variation in graduate student stipends across academic options and the large percentage of graduate students who live in non-Caltech housing. VP Marshak has suggested that the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Financial Aid Office should become involved in this issue. The committee believes that the faculty Student Housing Committee should eventually be included as well, as any proposals affecting graduate student stipends must ultimately receive faculty support.

3. Avery House Graduate Student Meal Plan

The committee has not yet been able to arrange a meeting with both Tom Mannion and Andre Mallie, so we may need to meet with each separately. We have informed VP Marshak that we wish to have the mandatory charge eliminated, as the committee and the Avery residents believe it is too expensive and the meal plan in its present form hampers, rather than helps, the creation of a community spirit at Avery. We will press forward with our efforts to eliminate the meal plan charge.

4. Housing Office Customer Service

We have discussed with VP Marshak the increasing number of minor to moderate complaints regarding the quality of service from the Caltech Housing department (both administrative as well as maintenance-related). She has been cc'ed on several student complaints as well and is concerned by the level of resident dissatisfaction. She is not yet certain how she will begin to address the problem, but we are hopeful that her involvement will lead to improvements. The Housing Committee will continue to work on this issue as well.

C. Social Committee (Graeme Smith)

1. GSC Term Party

We had an “I hate Valentines” party at the Cats on Feb. 18th. It rained a lot, reducing the attendance, but I think those who showed up had a good time.

D. Quality of Life (Jonathan Galownia)

1. Aetna Navigator – view your benefit statements online!

Aetna will shortly be releasing its Aetna Navigator program online. Using it, you can view your explanation of benefit statements, check your deductible, contact customer service, price medications/treatments, and even learn about your health. This should be a great time-saving tool, especially since you can choose to have your benefits statements kept online instead of being emailed to you. If you would like to preview this feature, please visit www.aetna.com and click the “log-in to Aetna Navigator” on the right had side of the page. From there, follow the directions.

1. Dental Insurance

HR has submitted requests for quotes to 5 major players. Once the players have been narrowed down to the top three, we will be invited to meetings with each company where we will discuss their proposals and enter our input. These meetings should begin in April.