

Minutes for the Second Fall 2017 All GSA Meeting

12/5/17

AGENDA

- Welcome
- Vice-President's Report
 - Travel Awards
 - Graduate Student Speaker Series
 - Nomination Committee
- Treasurer's Report
 - Budget Status
 - Holiday Party
 - Event funding
- Committee Reports
 - Housing
 - Benefits
- EPC Representative Report
- Report from the Office of Graduate Student Services

NOTES

- Welcome – In the absence of President Melissa King (Chemistry), Vice-President Anna Rogers (Molecular Biology & Biochemistry) welcomed the graduate student community and lead the meeting.
- Vice-President's Report
 - Travel Awards – The winner of the first GSA travel award was Zachary Drum, a first year student in Biology. His selection was unanimous by the panel which included Cheryl Hagner, the Director of Graduate Student Services, and two emeritus professors. Zachary was unable to attend the meeting because he was at the conference for which the travel award was granted, presenting his poster titled “The effect of endomembrane transport inhibitors on octanoic acid resistance in *Drosophila*.”
The next travel award will be given in the spring semester. An announcement will be sent out. Students are reminded that the award will be given in the form of a reimbursement.
 - Graduate Student Speaker Series – There were two Graduate Student Speaker events held this semester, which even included a performance. Attendance was strong.

Two more events will be held in the spring, on dates to be announced. The speakers will be Brandon Case (Molecular Biology & Biochemistry) and Angus Kahn (Physics).

- Nomination Committee – While it has been common in recent years for the current GSA board to seek out and collect the nominations for the following year's GSA positions, this is in fact supposed to be the responsibility of the Nomination Committee.

Three or four volunteers are needed. Their responsibilities will be to accept nominations, confirm that those nominated are willing to run, and generate the ballot to be voted on at the final GSA meeting of the spring semester.

The time commitment should be low and interested students should e-mail one of the current GSA board if they are interested.

- Treasurer's Report – In the absence of Treasurer Katie Sagarin (Biology), Vice-President Anna Rogers also gave the Treasurer's Report.
 - Budget Status – We are currently under budget.
 - Holiday Party – A holiday party was originally planned for the end of the fall semester. However, many students have other commitments and parties in this timeframe. Instead, the GSA will hold a party at the beginning of the spring semester. The proposed date is Saturday, January 27. More details will be announced closer to that date.
 - Event funding – A reminder that funding may be available for events which will be open to all graduate students. Previous examples include the hike which was held earlier this semester and last year's paint-in-the-park. A form is available on the GSA website.
- Committee Reports
 - Housing Committee – No report from the housing committee since their meeting with Res Life and Physical Plant is still to come. An update will be e-mailed.
 - Benefits Committee – No updates from the benefits committee.
- Educational Policy Committee Representative Report – Ender Terwilliger, GSA representative on the university-wide Educational Policy Committee, introduced himself. He described the purpose of the committee which is to deliberate on and decide policies affecting academic life across the university including regulations and scheduling. He encourages any graduate student who has an issue which might fall under EPC jurisdiction to contact him.
- Report from the Office of Graduate Studies – given by Director of Graduate Student Services, Cheryl Hagner
 - Taxes – The House of Representatives passed a bill making tuition waivers taxable. This would create a significant increase in tax responsibility for graduate students, though the exact amount does depend on the number of credits taken each semester. The Senate also has a bill which would not include taxing tuition waivers (though it does include a tax for the University based on the endowment per student). The Senate bill passed in the Senate and if the House accepts it, then

that bill would become law, but that seems unlikely. It's more likely that the two chambers will decide on a compromise by the end of the year.

Signing up for classes before the end of the year allows Wesleyan to "bill" students for classes this year, thereby avoiding tax liability on tuition waivers for Spring 2018. E-mails to sign-up for courses were sent out to graduate students and registration is now closed. Tutorial registration via paper form is still open. If the person at the window at the Registrar's office doesn't know/understand about the form, go across the hall to Paul Turenne.

Other suggestions for limiting graduate student tax liability have been received and are welcome. However, the University can't appear to be dodging taxes. Lawyers who advise the University's Vice President of Finance are looking into options. Cheryl's idea is to ask for higher stipends. Hopefully, it will all be moot. In the meantime, students can still call their Senators and Representatives, particularly if they're Republicans.

- Exiting Students – There is a new exit packet (and also orientation packet) in the form of a dynamic responsive website. It still collects the same information. Thanks to Barb Schukoske for making it happen.
- BA/MA Applications – Applications for BA/MAs for fall 2018 just closed. Lots of applications were received and it should be an interesting admission season.
- Writing Boot Camp – The Writing Boot Camp is back by popular demand. It will run on January 17 and students will need to register by January 12. One can think of it as a "day at a writing spa."
- Stress Reduction Workshop – The Office of Graduate Student Services and CAPS are teaming up to offer a Stress Reduction Workshop for graduate students, tomorrow, December 6. Registration is now closed.
- Career Services – Two workshops for graduate students were held with the Career Center in the fall and another two will be held in the spring. However, the Career Center still maintains the policy that graduate students can only schedule appointments during the academic breaks because they don't have enough staff to cover the demand during the regular semester. Jacob Gonzalez, who has a Ph.D. in the sciences will run the workshops in the spring. These will be more hands on than previous workshops.
- WordPress Workshop – A workshop on using WordPress to build a professional website was held in the fall semester. This was successful and will be run again in the spring.
- Questions?
 - What can students do to help/show support Cheryl and the VP of Finance? Consider writing a letter to the editor of the Argus. If you have suggestions, e-mail them to VP of Finance, Nate Peters.
 - Is Wesleyan in better shape than other Universities to deal with the results of the tax bill?
This is difficult to say since every program is set up differently.

- Will the health insurance rates be changing?
Wesleyan is part of a coalition with other schools which negotiate rates together. The rate depends on usage across the schools, so nothing is fixed. The rate is negotiated with Gallagher in May or June.
- The Office of Graduate Student Services will be closed from December 23 through January 1.