

GSC Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, February 2, 2005  
6:30 p.m., Graduate Student Lounge, Dudley House

### **Minutes**

The minutes from the December meeting were approved.

### **Mentoring Awards**

Miguel de Baca, GSC Communications Officer, announced that the deadline for Mentoring Award nominations would be February 14<sup>th</sup>. The awards honor faculty mentors who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in aid of their graduate students.

### **Guest Speakers**

Miguel also announced that he had been speaking with potential guests from the administration about attending GSC meetings, including representatives from Financial Aid, the Registrar's Office, the Bureau of Study Council, and University Health Services.

### **Office of Career Services**

Laura Malisheski and Robin Mount from the Office of Career Services (OCS) discussed several OCS programs planned for this spring and statistics regarding women in science. Nationally, out of 20,000 Ph.D.s in the sciences, women comprise 43% of the total in the life sciences, 30% in the physical sciences, and 17% in engineering and computer science. The equivalent Harvard data is still being extracted. Information on the career paths of exiting students is limited by the number of students taking postdoctoral fellowships; Cynthia Verba's surveys of students several years out are more relevant. Many women are coming through the pipeline, but men and women are leaving along the way.

OCS programs this spring include an Academic Career Chat on Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> and a talk on the imposter syndrome by Valerie Young on Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 [in Jefferson 250]. The imposter syndrome is represented by feelings of fraudulence, of being found out, and of not feeling as capable or successful as others think one to be. It often affects women and other underrepresented groups.

### **Women in Science**

Mary Farrow announced a forum on women in science planned for February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Panelists would include Jim Hogle and Everett Mendelsohn, current and former Masters of Dudley House.

Brant Robertson, GSC at-large representative for the natural sciences, presented a letter to the Harvard community on behalf of the Executive Committee [see below for the text]. He asked whether anyone present objected to the content of the letter; no objections were raised.

Imad Kordab, GSC international student representative, wanted to ensure that the letter wasn't attacking anyone at the university personally.

A motion to approve the letter passed.

### **Health Issues**

Carrie Thiessen from the Graduate Student Health Advisory Committee met with Melanie Green from University Health Services and hopes to arrange a future meeting between UHS and the GSC [a health forum co-sponsored by the GSC and the Harvard Graduate Council and featuring

several representatives from UHS is now planned for March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5 p.m. in the Dudley House Graduate Student Lounge]. The dental plan will no longer be offered; instead a package including a cleaning and x-rays will be available for \$70 off the usual charge. The dental plan had been losing money, and starting next year dental coverage will only be available for employees (it will be subsidized by Harvard).

A question was raised about the availability of UHS services for students who cannot come in to the infirmary (due to a blizzard, for example).

Carrie noted that UHS mental services has a new triage system to ensure that all patients receive help within 24 hours. Due to an unexpected opening in dermatology, some patients have had to wait up to four months for an appointment. Students in this situation should speak with patient advocate Linda Cannon (5-7583).

Students on leaves of absence can continue to receive the Blue Cross and UHS coverage for one year; traveling scholars are only eligible for the Blue Cross coverage.

In response to a question about optometry coverage, Carrie responded that the Blue Cross plan doesn't include coverage for glasses, etc.

If students have dependents on the Blue Cross plan who live out of state, the dependents still need to come to UHS for treatment; allowing them to be treated elsewhere would adversely affect the premiums for everyone.

Ernst van Nierop asked why Harvard doesn't offer a University-wide dental plan; Carrie responded that all of the plans Harvard has examined have been cost-prohibitive, and Harvard doesn't want to subsidize a graduate student dental plan.

A request was made that the GSC post answers to frequently asked questions about health issues on its website.

### **Curricular Review**

Sara Schwebel from the Curricular Review's Pedagogical Improvement Committee reported that little progress has been made so far; no consensus has emerged on how to improve undergraduate learning. Due to faculty resistance it is unlikely that the role of graduate students in undergraduate teaching will change significantly. Sara will be bringing up the issue of training opportunities for Teaching Fellows.

### **Interdisciplinary Student Survey**

Carrie Thiessen, interdisciplinary student representative, summarized the results of a survey of students in interdisciplinary and interfaculty programs. Students reported problems with obtaining teaching assignments and funding, having to apply again for admission after the second year, being added to departmental mailing lists, and obtaining information about fellowships.

### **Library Committee**

Sarah Carter from the FAS Library Committee noted that the extended borrowing privileges program (allowing all graduate students to check out books from Widener for six months at a time) is a pilot program and is now up for renewal. Books renewed in February should be due in September. The undergraduates would like 24-hour access to one of the libraries (likely Lamont).

Dominic Longo conveyed that the Harvard Graduate Council has discussed library hours and concluded a small extension to the hours for Widener would be a more effective change for graduate students. Sara Schwebel opined that we should support the undergraduates as their

mentors. A comment was made that closings during vacations are more detrimental to graduate students than limited hours.

### **DMS Issues**

Luigi Adamo, at-large representative from the Division of Medical Sciences, reported that a survey of medical area students revealed that gym facilities, T-pass subsidies, and academic program integration were the issues about which students were most concerned. A joint meeting with the GSC and the Biomedical Graduate Student Organization (BGSO) is planned for March 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 at the Longwood campus; all GSAS students are invited.

### **Housing Committee**

Ernst van Nierop from the GSC housing committee noted that Harvard Planning and Real Estate is planning a survey in April on student housing needs; the survey is conducted every three years.

Brant Robertson commented that safety paths exist for undergraduates between the undergraduate Houses, but no similar system is in place for graduate students in affiliated housing.

### **Elections**

Raven Saks was elected to the GSC Housing Committee.

Betty Chan was elected to the Graduate Student Health Advisory Committee.

Brant Robertson was chosen for the University Committee on Rights and Responsibilities.

### **Student Group Funding**

Imad Kordab from the Budget and Funding Committee noted that the committee would begin asking for more detailed applications from groups requesting GSC funding in future rounds, including bank statements.

Zoe Trodd, GSC president, added that groups' activities will be included in the calendar on the GSC website.

Ernst van Nierop noted that many applications were expensive as groups wanted to fly in guest speakers.

The following group funding amounts were approved:

Sorensen Memorial Conference in Sociology — \$0

Harvard Graduate Student Conference on International History — \$0

Central and East European Society — \$600

Harvard-MIT Philosophy Conference — \$1200

Harvard GSAS Colombian Society & Harvard Graduate Student Canadian Club — \$1000

Harvard Satirical Press — \$400

Romanian Graduate Club — \$700

Italian Conference — \$500

Harvard GSAS Christian Fellowship — \$410

**Adjourned** at 7:32.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Westover

## Draft letter to the Harvard University Community

As many students of the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) look forward to careers in natural science, technology, and engineering, the Graduate Student Council (GSC), the representative student body of GSAS, would like to address recent events regarding the role of gender in academic and professional achievement in these fields.

To our colleagues in GSAS, we extend our full support to all students pursuing careers in the sciences. We specifically express our great admiration for the impressive achievements of our women colleagues, especially under the unfortunate and distracting learning environment recently fomented here at Harvard University. We encourage all GSAS students to continue their progress toward advanced degrees, and we hope that the current atmosphere does not hamper the academic pursuits of our fellow graduate students.

To the undergraduate women of Harvard College, we encourage careers in the natural sciences, technology, and engineering. Careers in these fields will be rewarding, and attitudes toward gender equity in the sciences are more modern and thoughtful than recent events might suggest. As graduate students, we hope to take a more active role in mentoring undergraduate women interested in scientific careers and to help them realize their ability to attain the highest levels of achievement.

To the women faculty of Harvard University and associated institutions, we thank you for your outstanding contributions to your chosen academic fields and for enriching our graduate education. As our professors and mentors, we recognize you as the most capable and learned members of your field. We keenly anticipate working with our faculty to create the most positive and constructive learning environment possible.

As the GSAS graduate student body, the GSC has attempted to create awareness of gender issues by sponsoring a panel on gender and tenure in December, debating the issue at our February open meeting, and by sponsoring a presentation on the Imposter Syndrome in March. We continue to work closely with the GSAS Women's Group and the Standing Committee on Gender Equity to support graduate women in the sciences. We warmly welcome suggestions from the Harvard University community for ways we can contribute positively on this issue.

Sincerely,

The Harvard University Graduate Student Council