

GSC Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 4, 2005  
6:30 p.m., Graduate Student Lounge, Dudley House

## **Minutes**

The minutes from the March meeting were approved.

## **Financial Aid**

Dean Russell Berg and financial aid officers Janie Rangel and Bob LaPointe announced and answered questions about changes in graduate student financial aid. The administration's goal has been to ensure there are sufficient funds for every graduate student to complete their program in a reasonable amount of time without significant amounts of debt. Harvard doesn't have sufficient funding to support every student without other sources of funding (teaching and fellowships).

At the moment GSAS can't award dissertation fellowships to every eligible graduate student, but they are close; how close depends on the student's field. The financial aid office is trying to unite and convert other sources of funding to provide additional dissertation fellowships. One problem is that out of approximately 250 fifth- and sixth-year students who could apply for fellowships, only about 120 apply each year. The current requirements for a fellowship include two completed thesis chapters. The administration has discussed whether the grants should be considered dissertation fellowships (for research, possibly before the final year) or final-year fellowships for writing.

Zoe Trodd, GSC president, suggested that the GSC get input from department representatives in the humanities and social sciences to find out how the fellowships could be designed to best help students.

Kate Emans, at-large representative for the social sciences, asked about dissertation grants for students in interfaculty programs. Dean Berg responded that funding had always been department and program specific. Ideally all students in interfaculty programs would be eligible for dissertation fellowships.

Zoe Trodd asked about top-up payments for students in the humanities and social sciences teaching in the third and fourth years. Dean Berg responded that the expectation had been that students would teach two fifths in the third and fourth years. Since the two-fifths TF stipend was lower than the GSAS stipend in the first and second years, the top-up payment was designed to cover the difference so that students entering the third year would not see reductions in their stipends.

Janie Rangel noted that the timing of stipend payments has been affected by problems with the PeopleSoft system. Zoe Trodd asked about the scheduling of the payments; they currently come mid-term. Bob LaPointe noted that the financial aid office cannot award the top-up until departments tell the office how much students are teaching, and departments are often late with the notification. Zoe said that she would mention the issue at the department administrators meeting on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

A student in anthropology asked whether the top-up could be deferred for students not teaching in their fourth years; Dean Berg responded that the top-up was for third- and fourth-year students only.

Carrie Thiessen, interdisciplinary student representative, noted that some students in interfaculty programs with external fellowships for the second through fourth years have been unable to defer

their second-year stipend funding to the fifth year. Dean Berg responded that individual departments determined their own policies on how to apply fellowship funding.

### **Announcements**

Miguel de Baca, GSC communications officer, requested suggestions for future guest speakers for GSC meetings. He announced that a forum with President Summers had been scheduled for May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4:15 [later changed to 5:15].

Zoe Trodd, GSC president, reported on the Imposter Syndrome seminar March 10<sup>th</sup> that was co-sponsored by the GSC and the Office of Career Services. The room was filled to overflowing, and a follow-up event would be forthcoming.

Zoe noted that “Publish and Flourish,” an event co-sponsored by the GSC and the Bok Center, was planned for May 12<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m.

Zoe announced that course evaluations for graduate courses would be implemented across the board for spring term courses.

GSC officers would be meeting with department administrators later in the month. Zoe noted that general exam and advising guidelines were on the agenda and solicited other issues to discuss. One representative suggested that better teacher training and course development advice were needed.

### **Committee Updates**

Zoe announced that a task force on women in science had been formed; Mary Farrow (farrow@fas.harvard.edu) was serving as GSC liaison. Any interested students were urged to contact Mary, or bring issues to the task force ombudsperson, Linda Wilcox (432-4040).

Carrie Thiessen from the Graduate Student Health Advisory Committee reported that health fees had been reduced 7.3% for students next year, and a similar amount for dependents. In response to comments at the GSC/HGC/UHS open meeting in March, UHS was re-exploring dental insurance options, including possibly making the insurance mandatory.

Kate Emans, at-large representative for the social sciences, noted that the results of the survey of students in interdisciplinary and interfaculty programs had been presented to the GSAS deans. She urged students affiliated with the Design and Divinity Schools to contact her. One of the suggestions was an emergency cash system to tide over students receiving late teaching appointments.

Carrie Thiessen noted that the issues of general exam guidelines and departmental mailing lists would be brought up in the meeting with department administrators.

Bart Ostrowski, international student representative, asked international students with issues to bring up over the next year to contact him at ostrows@fas.harvard.edu.

Sarah Carter from the FAS Library Committee suggested that the GSC write a letter to Dean Kirby concerning the potential closure of the Fine Arts library. She also announced that a survey was forthcoming from the Harvard College and science libraries. One representative noted that graduate students at times have not been allowed to check out laptops at Lamont.

Luigi Adamo, at-large representative for the division of medical sciences, reported that the survey of medical area students suggested as priorities better gym facilities, T pass subsidies, and improved integration of programs. The suggestions received support from the GSAS and Longwood deans, and better gym facilities were a strong possibility. One attendee noted that students outside GSAS and Harvard Medical School had to pay to ride the M2 shuttle. Luigi

responded that GSAS, HMS, and the School of Public Health were paying for the shuttle, and any policy changes would be difficult because of funding arrangements.

Ernst van Nierop, GSC vice president, noted that the housing committee was seeking to involve students from the other graduate schools, and requested that anyone interested in serving on the committee contact him after the meeting. Ernst requested that students complete the online housing survey run by Harvard Real Estate Services.

## **Elections**

The following were elected to the Executive Committee for 2005-06:

President — Ben Lee (Applied Physics)

Vice President — Ernst van Nierop (DEAS)

Secretary — vacant

Treasurer — vacant

Advisor to the Council — Mike Westover (Astronomy)

At-Large Representative from the Division of Medical Sciences — Luigi Adamo (DMS)

At-Large Representative from the Humanities — vacant

At-Large Representative from the Natural Sciences — Vida de Arce (Biological Sciences in Dental Medicine)

At-Large Representative from the Social Sciences — vacant

Parliamentarian / Ombuds Coordinator — Ruwan Ratnayake (DEAS)

Interdisciplinary Student Representative — Sarah Carter (History of American Civilization)

International Student Representative — vacant

## **Student Group Funding**

Ben Lee, GSC treasurer, announced that student group funding amounts approved by the Budget and Funding Committee. The Harvard East Asia Society, Asian Baptist Student Koinonia, and Central and East European Society were not represented at the meeting, so their votes on their applications would be postponed to the May meeting. The following funding amounts were approved:

W.E.B. Du Bois Graduate Society — \$900

Harvard Buddhist Studies Forum — \$1300

Harvard Korea Society — \$1100

Harvard Dudley Dragonboat Club — \$1000

American Culture Society — \$500

GSAS Dutch Cultural Society — \$850

Harvard Philosophy and Law Society — \$300

GSAS Bahai Association — \$200

**Adjourned** at 7:33.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Westover