**GSA General Assembly Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday April 12, 2017**

**HGS 119, 6:30 PM**

Meeting started at 6:38PM

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes are approved.

1. Approval of Agenda

Agenda is approved.

1. Departmental meeting reports
   1. Music

Laura Brown: there are just over 40 students, and 8 attended (partially because it was held after break). Study space was an issue: we have carrels at the library, which has independent hours (Music Library might close before SML). This is annoying when people are studying for their qualifying exams, especially in the summer. Temperature is also a problem: we bought a temperature-sensitive robot that tweets when temperature exceeds a certain number. We also talked about unionization. Our department is pretty anti-union and has had negative experience with the union organizers. The main concern is the legal situation moving forward. Nick Curry: also, people have found it difficult to access resources/support for interdisciplinary work. Some people have talked about the university’s perceived emphasis on undergraduates.

* 1. Public Health

Michael Cohen: We do not have five years of funding. We are students of the graduate school but do not have the same financial resources. People suggested that PIs need to be trained in management skills. People have enjoyed the fitness center/library extended hours but want more access to Yale buildings as a public safety measure. A lot of people also are concerned with shuttle conditions (being crowded, children taking up too much space, etc.) especially as Yale College expands. There is also some concern about career services.

* 1. International and Development Economics

Fabian Schrey: masters students have different concerns: they would like to get into undergraduate colleges to access the dining halls and to use their HGS dining halls. They would like McDougal to open 24/7 (we will not steal any chairs!). Most masters programs have their career advisors, and IDE students would also like that resource in addition to their DGS. Students also did not receive safety emails during the summer before the term started. The core classes happen Wednesday at 6PM, so IDE students find it hard to participate in GSA. A lot of students have used double-swiping in dining halls to meet new friends, but this option is no longer available. Undergraduates and PhD students get 20 hours of free language tutoring, but masters students do not, and this seems to be a discriminatory practice. Economics PhD students are very happy with the new space, but they want to know how diversity and resources for working across departments can be improved.

Nick Vincent: public health: is the new dean interested in working on extending funding? Michael Cohen: from my knowledge, incoming students will have 5 years of funding, but current students do not have this. Nick Vincent: so you are grandfathered out? Michael Cohen: yes. And we are not sure what to do about this situation. Nick Vincent: right, and the funding comes from public health, not the graduate school. Laura Brown: for the career issue, we just had a presentation by Brian Frenette, which was very informative, so that is something you could try? Marius Constantin: there is also a third-year career program where they learn about what resources students want.

1. Semester Committee Reports
   1. Academic and Professional Development

Seb Bezerra: APD is in what the NFL would call a rebuilding year (Rachel had to step down earlier this year for personal reasons, and I will not be on the GSA next year). A few things we continue to work on: library issues: I have been working on the library committee, which has a lot of concerns about the availability of study space in Bass Library especially during exam periods. The committee thinks that Bass is seriously under-utilized, coupled with a 50% decrease in book circulation (and 1/3 of those books are mediated/retrieved through the staff, which is no different from retrieving these books from the shelving facility). The proposal now is to reduce Bass collection and to limit the collection to circulated books. The committee has conducted a study on reorganizing the space (e.g., creating study spaces surrounded by books). CSSSI will also increase study space, in anticipation of the 800 increase in the size of the undergraduate student body (which is the current priority of the library system).

Liz Salm: one of our projects is to look at mentorship and develop a rights and responsibilities/best practices document. We are compiling a document to see the common denominator across the university. It might also be useful to look at union contracts. We have also discussed with Katie Lofton (who chairs the committee on faculty standards). Seb Bezerra: anyone interested in running APD should talk to me so that we can figure out what APD should do next year. Melis Laebens: is the 50% drop a larger trend? Seb Bezerra: this is a larger and sustained trend. It is widely believed that this is because students are more frequently using online and digital resources. The question is just about whether we should confront/work around/accommodate this trend.

* 1. Facilities and Healthcare

Susan Pratt: we worked on the same projects we started last semester/before then. Dental insurance: it is not great right now, and we are working on a more comprehensive insurance plan. An opt-out plan would decrease premiums or add more benefits. Dr. Genecin and some of the other administrators just had a meeting today with the Provost’s Office, and we have a meeting with them later this month to see what we should do moving forward. We are also working on a mental health focus group. We finally got a faculty for this project! Wendy Xiao will be our coordinator, and we just submitted the IRB application. Once this application goes through, we will start recruiting students. We have not been able to hold a meeting with MHC since the passing of Howard Blue, but we will be soon. Toomas Laarits: we will present a report about housing recommendations. In the long run, we will suggest building more housing. Thank you, everyone, for filling out the survey about stipend! You should still let us know if you have more thoughts so that we can include them in the report. Yana Bebieva: SWAG (student wellness advisory group) was formed this semester. We had the second meeting today – the first steps SWAG is working on is the creation of peer wellness groups, which would improve wellness on the local level. They have 50 students. They would also like to brand wellness events (some recent events were held in CSSSI and have been a success). Mike Giannetto: In engineering, work spaces are diverse, with fancier buildings and Mason, where the ceiling is falling down on students. We are trying to get a better sense of the situation and of the administration’s plan for using these spaces in the future. Susan Pratt: Chill on the Hill had at least 75 participants. They now want to look into holding additional events elsewhere. GSA rep: SWAG probably will not serve the original purpose we wanted it to. We might want to think about bringing this up at another point.

* 1. Transit and Security

Emilio Salazar: we implemented a lot of what we started to do last semester. Red Line has started displaying some of the infographics we presented: please give me feedback! Fabian Schrey: we have sent out the survey and have received a good number of responses! We now have some data about general deficiencies in the Yale Transport system. Better door-to-door app, fixed time tables, express buses at peak times, counter-direction lines, daytime orange lines are some of the issues people brought up. In the morning when the orange line is running, people actually try to walk or bike, except those at the medical school. We are playing with the idea of an orange express shuttle connecting East Rock and the medical school, which might be a good compromise. The second main finding is that people take the fixed route shuttles from the medical school for very short distances (e.g., medical school to York Street). A lot of people walk from Mansfield to West Downtown (Ashmun might be unsafe?). We are working on: med school express shuttle, east rock express shuttle, and increasing bike friendliness in downtown areas to relieve pressure on Yale Transport. Melis Laebens: Also, people who live in East Rock and Wooster Square are more likely to be fearful of biking (because of lack of bike lanes, and especially for people working in the medical school or West Campus areas). But they do it anyway. People also do not have bike storage at home, so this might be a suggestion for what to include in new housing. We will bring some of these issues to the Transport Committee. Emilio Salazar: we will talk to Ed about some of these suggestions. We also want to communicate with people in case some shuttle lines are cut to make others possible. Liz Salm: in terms of thinking about the express shuttle to east rock/med school, many postdocs also use these routes in addition to graduate students. Toomas Laarits: are bikers afraid of traffic or safety? Melis Laebens: traffic especially. Connor Williams: there are a lot of grandparents who ride the shuttle lines and who are not included in the survey. GSA rep: red line shuttle drivers also do not allow people to stand. Carly Cox: a lot of people use the shuttle from the medical school for short distances for safety concerns. Katie Oltman: people also do not take the orange line from East Rock because they can never get on.

* 1. Public Relations

Alicia Steinmetz: we launched the podcast! We have about 5 episodes and have 2 more coming out. Next Thursday night, we will hold a fundraising and a bake sale at GPSCY to raise funds for the podcast project: please come and bring your friends! The next episodes will be on childcare and campus activism. Let me know if you have suggestions. We did a semester report last year and will probably continue with this. Nick Vincent: I have heard a lot of positive feedback about doing the semester report rather than the monthly newsletters. Laura Brown: in our department meeting, there were two suggestions for podcast: historical sound collection and sixth-year funding.

1. Resolutions and related discussions
   1. S17-002: Abolition of Webmaster Position

Sarah Malkowski: this resolution eliminates the webmaster position and subsumes the duties under the Public Relations committee, which also handles social media. Nick Vincent: Sarah’s predecessor has also toyed with this idea. David DeLeon: are the minutes on the website? Sarah Malkowski: they need to be updated more but the minutes are on there.

S17-002 passed by acclamation.

* 1. S17-003: Payment for Services to Graduate Student Assembly Representatives

Nick Vincent: a lot of spend a lot of time/energy with GSA. Some of this work can be compensated (e.g., editing and producing the *Compass*, and transferring the website). This resolution puts into the bylaws that we will not pay GSA reps for their services but does not tie our hands (there is an exception clause to overrule this by simple majority vote). Seb Bezerra: practically, we can still pay reps for their services, but this suggests a policy of not paying GSA reps. We have worked a lot on this language. Alicia Steinmetz: can we amend the language to reflect an exception for situations where we receive grants for specific projects? Seb Bezerra: we can still do this by a simple majority vote. Connor Williams: we should pay people for services. Liz Salm: we do not have the money.. Also, as the language stands, the resolution excludes grants anyway.

Alicia Steinmetz moves to amend the resolution:

“**Therefore, be it resolved** that the GSA will not pay active representatives *out of GSA funds* for time or services towards the completion of GSA projects, except in cases when the Assembly overrules this decision by a simple majority vote.”

Amendment passes.

Fabian Schrey: I am not convinced that we need to formalize this policy: how long would it take to approve, e.g., a website update project that takes a lot of money. Also, do you think that this would deter people from committing to time-consuming work? Nick Vincent: I would imagine 2-4 weeks (depending on when the person brings up this issue), and I do not think that this would deter people since so many reps have taken on many time-consuming tasks for the GSA without asking for money at all. Emilio Salazar: this resolution really ensures that GSA is a community based on volunteers and that no one pockets GSA money for their own gains. People can still get paid through the exception clause. Adam Matula: but now we have amended the resolution and have formalized making exceptions for grants. Seb Bezerra: there are legal consequences for abusing grants, and grants are very specific in how the money is to be used. Adam Matula: at my undergrad, some graduate students did abuse grant money and did not have any consequences. Toomas Laarits: the amended resolution is better because it allows for less discretion. GSA rep: I am not for funneling money to GSA reps, but if there are more benefits to being active on the GSA, would not more people want to participate?

S17-003 passes (32-8-2).

Nick Vincent: another issue we have talked about is making the chair an *ex officio* position. I have thought very hard about this with Liz, and I think we should think more on this issue before moving forward with it. For example, if another person were elected this year in Microbiology (my department) and if I were continuing with GSA next year, we would have to choose between two reps.

1. Preparing for April 26 meeting: officer elections and opening nominations

Nick Vincent: our April 26 meeting is elections for officers and committee chairs. We are working on a document of our position descriptions and will make it available soon. Typically, we go into this last meeting with the positions fully nominated.

1. Concerns from the floor

Nick Vincent: an issue we wrestled with at the end of this semester is downsizing/encouraging participation in GSA. We have talked to Dean Cooley, who has monthly meetings with DGS and will talk to them to encourage students to take vacant spots. Jenn Sun: we will have surplus money (1500) in the budget. Do you want swag? Chris Geissler: can this be channeled to CTF funding? Jenn Sun: no. Melis Laebens: can we use this for promotional events for elections? Nick Vincent: the elections are already under way, so it would not be from this year’s budget. Kate Phillips: could we donate to a charity? Jenn Sun: the budget re-starts in May. Katie Oltman: swag also encourages participation (e.g., GPSS). Toomas Laarits: it is good to donate, but we can also put the money to GSA work? Chris Geissler: giftcards? Jenn Sun: that is not allowed by Yale. Seb Bezerra: if we give a large chunk of money, the university will perceive that we do not need the money and will take it away from our budget next year. Sarah Malkowski: we should make sure we have enough t-shirts for all outgoing and incoming GSA reps. Emilio Salazar: we could spend money on a good voting mechanism (clickers?).

1. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:08PM.