

GSA General Assembly Meeting

Wednesday, September 4th, 2013

Meeting begins at 7:04 pm.

1. Approval of the Minutes
 - a. Delayed to next meeting for editing.
2. Approval of the Agenda
 - a. Approved by acclamation.
3. Resolution F13-009 -- Establishment of an Alumni Advisory Board for the GSA (Cynthia Rush)
 - a. Cindy explains the resolution.
 - i. This resolution would enable the GSA to seek advice based on people who have been through what we've been through.
 1. Also, this can help us begin to plan our own institutional history.
 - ii. The committee would include 3 former members of the GSA, staggered years of service
 1. Each of them would serve a three-year term, with one of their terms expiring every year.
 - b. Questions from the Floor
 - i. Brian Dunican: Where would we find interested alumni?
 1. Cindy: Good question. We hope to go through some of the GSA members who have been here the longest. Otherwise, we spoke with Tom Pollard, who's been meeting with the Steering Committee for several years. The main plan of attack is to solicit people we know already and branch out from there.
 2. Brian: There are also some former GSA members on the Graduate Student Alumni Association (GSAA) board who might be willing to serve, or know others who could.
 - a. <http://www.aya.yale.edu/content/gsaa-committee>
 - ii. Colton: Is the point to have the people not repeat things that failed in the past, or how to best get things through the system?
 1. Cindy: Both. We don't want to spend a lot of time running down an unproductive path that failed a few years ago. These people have probably worked with a lot of the same people and administrators we're currently working with.
 2. Dunican: Hopefully a 3-year term will help provide 3 years of institutional memory as well.
 - a. Cindy: Is asking for a three-year commitment a lot?
 - iii. Would they represent the social/life/sciences and humanities?
 1. Dunican: At present there's no such clause written in.

2. Faustin: I don't think it's a terrible idea eventually, but at the moment I'd be happy just to have any alumni who are happy to talk to us. I wouldn't be too upset if it was something like three historians.
 - iv. [Unknown]: Would they be expected to come to a meeting once a semester?
 - v. [Unknown]: Are these people alumni of the university or alumni of GSA?
 1. Cindy: Idea was alumni of the university who were in the GSA at the time. Virtual meeting/telepresence. Logistics would be worked out.
 - vi. Consuelo: Can we record these meetings and interactions so that others can learn?
 1. Brian: I would imagine meeting notes/minutes would be made available, either online or part of the folders that are passed on for the Steering Committee,
 - vii. Motion carries:
 1. 71% aye, 10% nay, 20% abstain (51 voters)
4. APD Report on Graduate Language Grading
- a. Lauren Young, European and Russian Studies, introduces the memo.
 - i. There's a contingent of master's students who are required to enroll in undergraduate classes, or language classes of some level that end up being undergraduate classes. A lot of these classes, for the first four semesters, end up being 5 days a week. Statistically a large number of these students are master's students.
 - ii. In fall 2012, master's students who had turned in form that changes the grades from the A/F scale to the H/HP/P/F scale found that they had a letter grade on their transcript. The Graduate School had changed their policy in November 2012 without notifying instructors or students. Several of us have met with administrators but have not gotten very far. We would like to work with GSA, and have been working with the APD committee, to approach on this issue.
 - iii. Our transcripts no longer look uniform. People have gotten questions at job interviews, such as why don't we have a GPA. There is concern that these grades might carry more weight.
 - iv. The other concern is that these classes are taking up more of their time than their other classes, both because they meet 5 days a week and because students don't want a C or similar grade on their transcript.
 - v. Another issue that's come to our attention is that many of these classes carry 5 credits (rather than 4 credits). Even though the

graduate students are being graded on the same level as the undergraduates, they aren't receiving any recognition.

b. Questions from the Floor

- i. Wendy: Why was it changed?
 1. Lauren: We don't know, we haven't been told. Can't guess as to why. "Emotional" issue.
 2. Saad: The transformation happened but then stopped halfway. Some classes (e.g. Vietnamese, Phoenician) are on the old scale. Not a uniform change.
- ii. Kristin: Instructor's point of view. Do you have in the report that Center for Language Studies doesn't give tutoring to graduate students?
 1. Lauren: No, we don't.
 2. Kristin: You should add that.
- iii. Scott Ross: The Center for Language Study has been standardizing things, but there's a separate thing that has to do with the credits.
- iv. Colton: I was under the impression that anything which shows up as your grade for A-F grading, on your official transcript, it's a SAT/UNSAT.
 1. Lauren: That's not true for these language classes. Language classes specifically with an undergraduate course number.
- v. Sara Sanchez-Alonso: It seems like you want to shift back towards the old system, but there are also issues like the credit issue and access to tutoring. How are these other issues relevant to the grading scale? Why are they in this memo?
 1. Lauren: I would say they are relevant, because we're not given the same access to resources, but we are being held to the same standards.
 2. Sara: So there are two levels [solutions]: one is that we should go back to the old grading system; the other is that, if you don't, give us access to the same resources.
- vi. Wendy: And these are degree requirements?
 1. Lauren: Yes, depends on the program.
 2. Scott Ross: Less-commonly taught languages tend to be offered on the graduate grading scale.
 3. Wendy: Why are they being forced to take a beginner-level course?
 - a. Lauren: Anecdotally, for my program, since we require two languages, many people came in having one language, but having to start one new language from scratch.
 4. Wendy: Do those classes help you with your master's?

- a. Lauren: I think that depends. If someone wanted to be a linguist or translator, absolutely. It's an individualized experience. Not really relevant for me, but someone else in my program would say something else entirely different.
- vii. Scott: The big issue with this is that many students with these requirements are in Area Studies.
- viii. Brian: It seems to me that the question for the GSA is not whether the departmental requirements are fair, but whether the grading policy creates undue stress on some fraction of the graduate students.
- ix. The assembly moves to postpone this to the end of the reports, while Saad and Lauren put together a resolution summarizing the memo and what we're actually approving.
 1. Later in the meeting, the resolution passes: 93% yes, 2% no, 5% abstain (45 votes).

5. Reports

- a. Steering Committee (Brian Dunican)
 - i. Spoke to Dean Pollard about the selection of his replacement. He does not yet know how that will happen. He mentioned a funny story, that he was the chair of the selection committee for the most recent Dean of Graduate Studies. He put together 8 names, his name was none of them, they administration went ahead and interviewed some people, and then they invited him to be the Dean.
 - ii. It's time to renew the GSA budget, so we are in the process of doing that, trying to increase the funding for CTF for next year.
 - iii. Next year, the Ivy Summit will be held at Yale. We approached the dean about funding that. He assured us that the GSAS is aware of the cost and will cover it.
 - iv. We discussed the teaching review proposal, which they are not yet able to put together on their end.
- b. Transit and Security (Sachi)
 - i. No update, just an announcement about the two-way conversion meeting.
- c. Academics and professional development (Will Gray)
 - i. Lauren and Saad discussed the graduate grading for languages issue.
 - ii. In addition to that, Mark is the University-Wide library committee, which reported back the following: graduate students are the major users of the libraries. Libraries are now unable to collect all of the works out there because there are simply too many. We might see, in the distant future, Ivies specializing towards distinct areas and coordinating that with each other.

- iii. The committee put together a teaching survey for the representatives to fill out.
- d. Facilities and Healthcare (Michelle)
 - i. FHC is putting together a healthcare survey to send out to the student body. Trying to get feedback on mental health and dental/vision.
 - ii. FHC is trying to re-establish contact with the gym administration, possibly collaborating with GPSS and McDougal Athletics Fellows. Help get things transparent with them.
 - iii. The Housing Fair is postponed from tomorrow until this coming Thursday, 20th, 5-7pm at Harkness in the Medical School, due to snow.
 - iv. We held a tax advice session about two weeks ago, spearheaded by Chad Marion and Angharad.
 - 1. Over 100 students in attendance, >60 US residents and almost 40 international. The accountant was very enthusiastic, seemed likely to come back. Many people and organizations were also involved, including OISS.
 - 2. Currently in the process of gathering feedback from our attendees.
 - 3. Colton: Some people from my department attended and said that it was all federal stuff, but the Connecticut taxes are what cause issues for people, and were brushed off when.
 - a. Michael Parker: This was a burning interest for graduate students, and Chad took the initiative to put it all together, so let's give him a hand.
 - v. Wendy: New Haven Towers met with the housing committee, I was banned from attending because they wanted to talk about how I was the source of all their problems. 50 people gave me feedback about New Haven Towers. We hope to move towards an official memo.
 - 1. Winchester Lofts, the new apartment buildings opening near Science Hill, gave a presentation that seemed really great. Price range probably around what Eli is, which is a bit high, but with many amenities. They will be at the housing fair.
 - 2. Question about publicizing the event from the floor.
 - a. Wendy: Facebook event, and there's been an email.
- e. Publicity (Justine Walden)
 - i. The way you request is a flyer is via our own website. On the left-hand side of the gray navigation bar, there is a form that says "Publicity Requests."

- ii. "Facebook File" email has been sent out. Please respond to that email with ideas for facts to put on Facebook, etc. They can be goofy!
 - iii. You can send everyone your GSA 2014 Valentine (a new flyer that the committee put together).
- f. Immunobiology Department Meeting (Bill Ruff/Michael Parker)
 - i. 15 students attended.
 - ii. Got through 95% of the checklist.
 - iii. No one who'd attended had used the CTF fund, but there was interest in applying
 - iv. No one had attended the ask-a-lawyer session but were glad the opportunity is available.
 - v. One of our students went to ask-an-accountant, were glad it was offered, were probably just as confused after as before they went, but at least it oriented them a little about where to go and what to look for.
 - vi. One student had used Common Grounds.
 - vii. No one had used Career Services yet; many plan to.
 - 1. Want more availability of what students do after they graduate. There is some information available but it's sparse and not very fine-grained. Want to know industry versus academia, which universities or institutions or companies, etc.
 - 2. Apparently faculty now regularly receive a newsletter that lets them know about career services events so they can serve their mentees.
 - viii. Students are satisfied with their teaching placements but there is no transparency, seems random. (Our department doesn't have many classes, so our students are at a disadvantage. Never know why or how we do or don't get positions outside our department. Feedback would be good.)
 - 1. Expressed interest in a centralized, IT-driven process rather than emailing Excel spreadsheets around (cumbersome, lost).
 - ix. Could use more bike racks in front of TAC on the med campus (already a lot of room).
 - 1. Alley between Boyer and Hope is always full of bikes and needs more racks.
 - x. No problems with student health but glad that the GSA is addressing mental health, they already knew about mental health without having to be prompted.
 - xi. One student won't get EyeMed next year because it doesn't seem cost-effective, not enough benefits, but they do like Delta Dental.

- xii. Students felt like they did not have adequate housing about New Haven before they arrived. Goes back to the website that's in the works. Maybe more information in the Compass, especially about when housing becomes available and when leases need to be signed (e.g. May-June in East Rock, but late-February/early March in the city), since this is something you otherwise find out the hard way.
 - 1. Like the Compass but want more information about housing in it.
 - 2. Potential site could include transport options from each neighborhood, e.g. ZipCar locations, city buses (not just the Yale shuttles); Compass currently glosses over these issues.
- xiii. Student Center – want music and recording practice rooms there. Many windows, much light, very welcome, such uplifting, wow. Also want fireplaces.
- xiv. Complained about gym hours.
 - 1. Maybe TAC could use a gym, or a grad-student-specific gym.
 - 2. We're allowed to use the medical student gym but it costs \$15/month.
- xv. In general, have adequate space for work and study; most of our students don't go to HGS.
- xvi. Miscellaneous
 - 1. Size of Red Line shuttles – short busses most of the time, people will bypass stops because they're full, inconsistency with allowing standing passengers (they shouldn't, ever)
 - 2. George Street safety concerns – mugging or harassment
 - a. Walking on the way towards the med campus
 - 3. Medical Campus and Train Station
 - 4. One student was being told they couldn't get picked up from the train station and had to wait for the Blue Line.
 - 5. Grad students should be able to print an unofficial transcript.
- g. History Department meeting (Ryan Hall and Nazanin Sullivan)
 - i. Jan 27
 - 1. 20 students
 - ii. Generally happy, but...
 - iii. Many concerns about teaching
 - 1. Wanted more opportunities to teach their own courses, only something like 2 PTAI opportunities for a huge department.
 - 2. More opportunities to lecture, would make us more competitive in the job market compared to other schools.

- iv. Concerned about lack of transparency in teaching selection process
 - 1. History department is basically just told what classes we're going to teach, mysterious committee that makes these choices.
 - 2. Also want more transparency in inter-departmental teaching, not sure why we get shifted to other departments' courses.
- v. Lots of concerns with need for more clarity in allotment of teaching for the non-guaranteed-teaching years. Lots of uncertainty – what courses, how many sections, writing-intensive or not – related to money. Especially significant for international students.
- vi. Department issues
 - 1. More transparency in departmental policy-making, implemented some changes that we weren't made aware of. Big thing is that second years can begin to teach (as opposed to the third year) which is a big concern because we're a large department, fewer opportunities for the higher-level classes.
 - 2. DGS said they didn't think of how this would affect upper-level students before implementing the change at a department meeting
- vii. Mental Health/Communication
 - 1. Complaint that it needs better centralization of communication, especially for referrals amongst departments.
- viii. Yale Health
 - 1. Concern with getting appointments, especially in OB/GYN, which seems very understaffed (up to 4 months). Some people felt like they didn't have a voice in their treatment, wanted more discussion of options, treated like adults.
- ix. Everyone wanted extended library and gym hours.
- x. Really want the Blue Dog extended hours because we're in HGS, as well as extended hours in the McDougal Common Room. We don't have offices.
 - 1. More snacks.
- xi. Accessibility issues – HGS A wing, library.
- xii. Regarding the problem of TF allocation, something about TF fellows/alternate funding sources.
- xiii. Questions
 - 1. Lauren talks
 - 2. Elizabeth points out that Yale health is updating to myChart, which should ease some of these issues.

- xiv. Brian Dunican: points of information:
 1. Working with the dean on the Common Room issue.
 2. Most people do get teaching in their later years, but there is uncertainty.
- h. History of Art (Alexandra Morrison, Nicole Sullo & Samuel Sackeroff)
 - i. Lots of overlap with other people; flagging the main things.
 - ii. Vibe is generally pretty good also.
 - iii. Career Services – felt it was insulting to feel non-academic things like consulting.
 - iv. Teaching: similarly, wanted increased lecturing opportunities. Associates in Teaching program that partners with faculty and propose a syllabus, many people wanted to see this program expanded and more aggressively/proactively advertised. Feeling it was maybe being downplayed or not being supported.
 - v. Concern about online teaching being more intensive than normal section teaching, maybe there should be some accommodation or recognition for this.
 - vi. Bike racks: more in front of Rudolph Hall and the Art Gallery (always full).
 - vii. Shuttle: concern about wait times, especially in the mornings if you're going to the train. 5-40 minute wait. Reliability in terms of making stops.
 - viii. Mental health – culture of silence.
 - ix. Health services – over-diagnosis or under-diagnosis.
 1. Anecdote: "I have allergies" "it's probably a sinus tumor" **turns out to be allergies**
 2. In other cases, would not take someone seriously
 3. Issues with nurse practitioners as well, variable; how bad GP's are
 - x. Desire to have health insurance cover students while abroad
 1. EyeMed found to be not useful
 - xi. Housing issues
 1. Glad that GSA is being proactive about letting incoming students know their options
 - xii. Questions
 1. Lauren Tilton: EyeMed should be very useful, get \$100 of discounts plus for \$50, but it's not really insurance. The plan is up for negotiations again, let me or Michelle know.
 2. Discussion about healthcare when not at Ylae.
- i. Statistics (Cindy Rush)
 - i. 20 students attended. (Half master's, half PhD's.)
 - ii. Master's is a one-year program, so career services is very important. Want job fairs, wish they had some of the privileges that the undergrads do (e.g. internship website where employers

post and have partnerships with 11 schools; grad students at some of these other schools can access this, but not Yale)

- iii. Teaching – odd situation where we have more positions than students to fill! End up teaching classes we aren't prepared for. Cindy herself taught a grad level class I hadn't taken.
 - 1. Would also like more lecturing opportunities, mostly have TF (grading/office hour) positions.
 - iv. Wish it were easier to get to the train station and grocery store.
 - v. Would like more Blue Lights by Prospect Gardens (Div School).
 - vi. Bikeshare would be easier to use if there were more return locations.
 - vii. Facilities and Healthcare: Main concern is there's a footbridge in front of our department that becomes very slippery, they've been trying to fix it for ~4 years.
 - 1. Gym: one student requested a flat rate fee for classes instead of the per-class fee, so he can drop into any of the classes available.
 - 2. We have 24 hour access to our department and have desks there, sort of, so we're good there.
 - viii. Mental health: Someone took 4 months to get placed.
 - ix. Everyone likes Yale Health but one student had one bad experience where an off-site procedure was requested, but then Yale Health refused to follow-up after that procedure because it took place off-site.
6. Concerns from Floor & Announcements
- a. Brian Dunican
 - i. Position on the Steering Committee available due to a scheduling conflict; voting at next meeting.
 - ii. Ad-hoc Committee on Decanal Structure
 - 1. Tec committee released a report about creating a Dean of the Faculty for Arts and Sciences.
 - 2. We sent around the link to the report and the YDN article. That committee wants to meet with Steering next week.
 - 3. Any comments? Please send Brian an email and we will make sure they get directly to that committee.
 - b. 1-way to 2-way town hall meeting is <>
 - i. Flyers being passed around.
 - 1. Thanks to publicity!
 - c. Housing Fair moved to the 20th
 - d. Conference Travel Fellowship needs one more social science reader.
 - i. Sam Sackeroff volunteer.
 - 1. No objections to having an art historian instead of a social scientist; the divisional structure is tradition, but not formally in the bylaws.

- e. Joori: Strategic Plan
 - i. There was an email from Brittany about the strategic plan, please fill out that survey, 5 or 6 questions, really quick.
 - f. Paul: Accessibility issues
- 7. The meeting adjourns at 8:20pm.