

GSA General Assembly Meeting
Monday, November 11th, 2019
6:00PM, Watson Center (60 Sachem Street), Room A74

Meeting began at 6.00pm

I. Approval of minutes
Minutes are approved

II. Approval of agenda
Agenda was approved

III. Conversation with Lynn Cooley, GSAS Dean, and Richard Sleight, GSAS Administrative Dean
UPass

Dean Cooley responded to a series of pre-submitted questions from representatives.

What progress has been made on acquiring UPass for graduate students?

Dean Cooley: The negotiations on UPass have been a bit of an odyssey. In the state of CT, UPass is offered to undergraduates at state schools, at a cost of \$20 per semester for access to all CT Transit. Making this available for private school graduate students will be a change on two fronts. The arrival of a new governor will also shift the conversation. On the Yale side, the challenge has been to understand how deep the interest in this is. John Mayes and Jack Callahan have been talking to the state about making UPass accessible to all G&P students. As GSAS, we only represent a subset of this population. We also need to set up a mechanism for how to collect \$20 per semester from students; the state will want the funds upfront, so we'd have to set up a payment structure. **Devan Solanki (Chemical and Environmental Engineering):** GPSS passed a resolution along with GSA; professional students are interested in this as well. **Dean Cooley:** Were students aware of the cost when they passed this? **Devan Solanki:** They were. **Dean Sleight:** There was a low response rate to the survey that asked the UPass question. But if GPSS and GSA passed a joint resolution, should we interpret this as a mandate from graduate students? **Devan Solanki:** That seems right. **Maria del Mar Galindo (English, GSA Secretary):** When we talk about \$20 per semester, is this the full cost of the pass? Will the university not subsidize this at all? **Dean Cooley:** That's right. **Jacob Derechin (Sociology):** How much of a logistics problem would it be to get the university to cover this? **Dean Cooley:** The way the university budget is set up, there's a central budget (main campus, college, central programs). Everything at the professional schools is a separate budget. So this would involve coordination between all schools; this is quite challenging. New provost may change this, but he will have several priorities. **Dean Sleight:** If we are charging students, we can be aggressive and move as quickly as possible. Otherwise we'll have to negotiate and this will be a much slower process. **Dean Cooley:** If one school disagrees, the entire process would be halted. **Emily Davidson (Public Health):** Do some of our peer institutions offer similar subsidized access to transport? **Meaghan McGeary (Experimental Pathology, T&S Chair):** Almost all of our peer institutions have some kind of university-facilitated access to public transportation in the area. **John Gonzalez (Biological and Biomedical Science):** MIT students and employees have access to

Boston transport; it's been integrated into MIT IDs, so that students and employees can swipe in using the same card. **Dean Cooley:** We're a little different than many graduate schools in that we don't have a graduate fee for students (GSA and GPSS would normally have a budget from this). So signing on to something like UPass will be a new model for us. **Chris Londa (Classics):** This is a really good idea for several reasons. It would encourage people to travel around Connecticut, and it would be an investment in the environment and the local community. **Dean Cooley:** We agree. Additionally it would give students access to apartments away from central New Haven, but which are on the CT bus routes. **Chris Londa:** This seems like something to be implemented sooner rather than later. For graduate students who live in New York City, this would cut transport costs in half instantly. **Gadareth Higgs (Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology):** As a commuter, I can attest to this. I spend over \$5000 a year on Metro North.

What do you see as the ideal relationship between your office and the GSA?

Dean Cooley: We are in charge of policies for 2800 PhD students and 200 Masters students. Everyone has different ideas of what would make their time in graduate school better. One thing the GSA does is identify priorities that cut across students' needs, especially for things that require significant budgets (but also those that don't). The GSA Steering Committee gives us a sense of what is on the horizon and how to prioritize needs. The Dean's Emergency Fund that launched last semester came out of that, as did the alterations to the family support budget (changing the cut-off age for dependents from 13 to 18). Another thing I am hoping representatives will do is be active in their departments to gather and disseminate information: what are the questions being considered, what is going on? Returning this information back to the deans is invaluable. **Dean Sleight:** We try hard to give information to all students. We probably send too many emails as it is, but we're always finding a student who says, "I didn't know you could do that/that resource was available." People aren't reading the programs and policies book, obviously; GSA can give individuals information about resources and direct them to the deans. **Dean Cooley:** We've been considering training people to have information about resources on campus, to have them be recognizable resources *about* resources.

What is the current status of developing department-specific advising guidelines?

Dean Cooley: Some departments have very detailed and good department-specific guidelines. It would be a wonderful thing if GSA could collect all of these so that we can see where we are at at the GSAS level and where there are gaps. Faculty members tend to think of guidelines as detailing what students are supposed to do in terms of movement through the program. We need to make guidelines reflect both sides of the coin, and stress what faculty responsibilities are. **Emily Davidson:** Once you have those guidelines, though, what's the mechanism for holding faculty accountable? How could we make sure faculty are following through and being held accountable? **Dean Cooley:** A good first step is asking faculty as a group to work on this in conjunction with students. This would be a consciousness-raising exercise. The more we can get faculty and students on the same page, the better. This would also hopefully increase peer pressure from colleagues to do the right thing, and we can reinforce this in our conversations with the DGS group. It's always better to incentivize good behavior than to punish bad behavior, though some punitive measures are available to the dean's office when it becomes necessary. **Maria del Mar Galindo:** How can we increase momentum in departments for this? Is this something we can point to as an official graduate-wide initiative? **Dean Cooley:** We're regularly talking to faculty and the DGS group. **Maria del**

Mar Galindo: Could we set a deadline or provide some other official incentive, though? **Dean Cooley:** This is a good idea, and we can do that when we have a better sense of departmental realities. **Ethan Perets (Chemistry, GSA Parliamentarian):** I'd like to share something relevant from our experience in Chemistry, where there is a faculty search underway. We have been collecting data—talking to students in different departments—to see what role graduate students play in faculty searches. A couple of years ago a former chair in the Chemistry department told us that graduate students couldn't really be involved in faculty searches. Other departments have heard similar things. But Professor Vivian Irish (MCDB Chair) has helped establish a committee of six students from different labs who meet with job candidates and interview them. These students submit a report to the faculty, outlining their views on both the scientific rigor of the candidate's views and on whether they would be a good mentor. The report becomes part of the documentation that the committee considers when taking a vote. This is one example where there is a high level of involvement from graduate students in a really effective way. If the Dean's office could make it clearer to faculty across the university that students can have a very effective role in faculty searches, for example, we might see more of this. **Dean Cooley:** A typical way that something like this could be shared would be having people come to DGS meetings and talk about best practices. **Ethan Perets:** The Chemistry reps currently working with Chemistry leadership using the MCDB model, and may be making some gains. **Dean Cooley:** Some departments are doing searches that involve a lot of candidates; this might be a heavy load for students. And different departments have different cultures and histories, so not everyone will get involved. But we can publicize this. **Dean Sleight:** GSAS as a whole doesn't have any policy related to this at all. We could check with the FAS Dean's office to see if they have any process, information, or regulations in their books.

Miscellaneous

Devan Solanki: More groups are moving over to work in West Campus. There is no dinner access; the campus only has one food establishment in the conference center, and it stops serving at 2pm. This, among other things, makes it hard for graduate students to stay on West campus throughout the day without a personal vehicle--it's a vast land. **Jake Spies (Chemistry):** The cafeteria used to be open later. 2-3 years ago this stopped, I think due to under-utilization. **Dean Cooley:** But now there are more people there--I think over 150 students. **Devan Solanki:** And growing.

CJ Rice (History): Dean Cooley, I saw your piece in the Atlanta Journal Constitution in support of the Romero family. I want to commend you for standing by my colleague Cristian and his family. But I wonder if there are other avenues that we are pursuing to support the Romero family? **Dean Cooley:** Yes. We have reached out to legislators in Georgia, including ones not in his district in case they can help. Cristian has done an incredible job advocating for his mother, and is already in contact with Rep. McBath's office. I believe we have to be strongly in support of Cristian and his family, and all other DACA students. We have to rally behind them. But this is occurring in the context of an administration that is staunchly opposed to immigration. There is a concern that too large a fuss from a "liberal institution" like Yale would result in conservative backlash. Cristian has done an amazing job of getting media attention, and we are doing what we can to support that. But at this stage we don't really know which method could be more effective—quiet behind-the-scenes work, or being out there in the public media. We are going to continue sharing information about this and trying to get more support for Cristian.

Tyler Hayward (East Asian Studies): Thank you for setting up the Dean's Emergency Fund last semester. I have a question about implementation: what is the reason for Masters' students not being able to apply? **Dean Sleight:** When we started out we had great fears that a lot of money would go out very fast, so we tried to start out small. **Dean Cooley:** We could consider expanding to Masters students as we establish more of a precedent for operation.

Anri Chomentowska (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology): I have a question about the funding model for the graduate school in general. We recently were given a renewed understanding of where the money was coming from within EEB. It made graduate students wonder whether the distribution of University fellowships is equal across departments. Some of my constituents were upset with what they learned--it seemed from the information that we are required to teach a lot more than other departments. I don't think this is true, but tackling this misinformation between departments would be very helpful. **Dean Cooley:** That's a great question, and a long-term project of ours. The first thing to understand about funding models in the Sciences Division, is that pretty much all departments have different models. There are several models in the Sciences, whereas there is only one for the Humanities and Social Sciences. What we're working on now is getting more fellowships to departments. Grant-funded programs' resources fluctuate, and we want to be headed toward a more flexible and responsive model. In EEB, the strong tradition for many years was that students only spent five years in grad school. This is changing. Faculty didn't think it was their responsibility to fund for a sixth year, given the precedent. We're working on this. We're not quite done figuring out EEB's specific questions, but we are certainly pushing for the idea that university funding can extend into year six. I'm not surprised this has been confusing to students; we're in a two-way conversation with programs about this.

Lucy Armentano (Psychology, GSA Chair) thanked the deans for being there and highlighted to representatives that they could submit further questions for the deans through the Steering Committee. She also stressed that more controversial questions for guests at GSA meetings can be submitted in advance so they can be raised anonymously by the Chair.

IV. CTF Ad-Hoc Committee Bill

Lucy Armentano: The CTF has been an evolving program over the past couple of years. We received a major fund increase and have made changes to its operations. The bill submitted by the CTF Director (**Jo Machesky, Chemical and Environmental Engineering**) proposes the formation of an ad hoc committee to support her with work and decisions related to the CTF. Our discussion today should focus on this particular bill; we can add the CTF to the agenda at a future meeting for broader discussion.

Whereas the Graduate Student Assembly plays a significant role in the representation of and advocacy on behalf of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences students,

Whereas the GSA CTF provides funds for students to attend conferences when there are no departmental or advisor funds available,

Whereas there have been insufficient CTF funds to support the number of CTF applications and insufficient information about which departments need CTF funds,

Therefore be it resolved by the Graduate Student Assembly that an ad hoc committee be created to provide feedback on changes to CTF requirements and help propose changes to the CTF,

Be it Further Resolved that this committee shall present its findings and disband no later than May 1, 2020.

Be it further resolved that this committee will include at least one representative from each division.

Jake Spies introduced an amendment for consideration:

- 1. Be it Further Resolved that this ad hoc committee may be converted into a regular standing committee at the discretion of the Assembly via a revision to the bylaws once its effectiveness has been assessed;*
- 2. Be it Further Resolved that significant policy changes to the CTF from the CTF director or the ad hoc committee are not to be implemented during the fiscal year, so as to avoid interruption or confusion during a current CTF cycle*
- 3. Be it Further Resolved that any significant policy changes from the CTF director or the ad hoc committee will be subject to a majority vote of the Assembly before the end of the fiscal year that is immediately prior to the fiscal year in which the changes will be implemented;*
- 4. Be it Further Resolved that changes to department access to CTF funds at any time will be immediately subject to a two-thirds vote of the Assembly.*

Jo Machesky accepted (1) and (2) as friendly amendments. The Assembly discussed (3) and (4).

Julianne Rolf (Chemical and Environmental Engineering): (3) and (4) go beyond the purview of an ad hoc committee bill. **Ryan Petersburg (Physics, GSA Vice-Chair):** By including (3) and (4) we are creating a change to the way the Graduate Student Assembly runs the committee; this is a bylaws issue. **Ethan Perets:** As per Robert's Rules, any amendments that are directly related to the original bill can be included. As Parliamentarian I see (3) and (4) as related, as they further outline the operation of the ad hoc committee. **Daniel Giraldo Perez (Economics):** If this is a change to the bylaws, though, doesn't it require more than a majority vote? **Chris Londa:** This also seems to involve a broader conversation about the CTF. What are the current issues? What are we trying to address? **Devan Solanki:** If this is an amendment to a bylaw, it requires a two-thirds vote. **Ethan Perets:** In our bylaws the creation of an ad hoc committee, which is what the bill is about, only requires a simple majority.

Emily Davidson: Can someone provide a historical context for this discussion? **Jo Machesky:** The Conference Travel Fund is administered by the GSA. Its resources used to be 60,000 dollars a year, and originally decisions on applications were made by committee. The resources are now \$120,000, with an

additional \$120,000 available for international research through the MacMillan Center. The CTF Director has control of how that money can be distributed among students. **Ryan Petersburg:** This is the result of a bylaws change we made two years ago. **Jo Machesky:** There have been more policy changes since then, proposed by the outgoing CTF director from 2018-2019. There were brought to the GSA in the Spring. The previous quarter-based application timeline was abolished, based on data for last year and on the idea that a year-round application process would be more efficient and allow students would hear back at a faster rate. At the same time, however, the CTF was broadly and clearly publicized for the first time. We did not expect the surge in applications; clearly knowledge about the CTF was not reaching the full graduate student population previously. In response to the current application rate, we are trying to emphasize that the CTF is a fund of *last resort*, for departments with no conference travel funding. We also used to accept two applications per year; now we only accept one. The 2018-2019 budget created a deficit for 2019-2020 due to the timelines of reimbursement processes; the deficit matched the amount awarded for second applications almost exactly, so we thought abolishing these would reduce this strain on the budget. We made these changes during Summer Steering Committee, in order to allow them to be implemented in advance of the academic year. Currently we are working on gathering information from departments about the types of funding they have available, to better decide what applications should be “bounced back” to the department. This would be done between the CTF and the department: we don’t want to create strain on student applicants. The current issue is that the greater publicity of the fund has resulted in such a large volume of applications in relationship to last year that we have awarded a large percentage of our funds already. In order to investigate what options are open to us, including gathering information about departmental funding, I am proposing we form a committee to support the CTF Director with this work.

The Assembly voted on (3) and (4) in the proposed amendment. (3) and (4) were rejected, with 38 votes against, 16 votes for, and 4 abstentions.

The Assembly voted on the ad-hoc committee bill, including friendly amendments (1) and (2). The bill passed with 50 votes in favor, 5 against, and 1 abstention.

V. Department engagement working time

Lucy Armentano and **Maria del Mar Galindo** provided a brief update on the DEI initiative.

Lucy Armentano shared a link to a form about graduate student involvement in departmental matters; representatives spent the working time providing information about their own departmental practices.

VI. Department meeting reports

Lucy Armentano: This year we are asking representatives to provide information on their department meetings in advance of reporting to the Assembly, so we can gather information on commonalities to address at a later meeting. **Ryan Petersburg:** We are making suggestions to representatives about what to highlight in their report that might be specific to their department, but representatives are free to raise whatever they prefer.

Gadareth Higgs and **Victor Bass** provided the **MCDB** report:

1. On faculty searches, MCDB encourages its student committee to consider whether they could see themselves working for a candidate\=;
2. The department's "Research in Progress" talks have been restructured to take place on Fridays, in two long sections followed by happy hour. Students have responded positively to this change. Faculty attendance, however, is even lower than before, and it was already not very high. Chair and DGS acknowledge the problem, and have tried to encourage participation;
3. On teaching, all of the BBS departments have a form to sign up for teaching assignments in order of preference. There is a lack of transparency; some people have been told that assignments have been made before the form is filled out.
4. The meeting had about 10% attendance.

Nicolle Rosa Mercado (Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry): The way that it works is that everyone fills out the form and faculty declares preference for certain students. So even if you fill out the form, it is still subjective. **Victor Bass**: Some courses interview for teaching positions, which is subjective but more transparent.

Kristen Herdman provided the **Medieval Studies** report:

1. The meeting took place on October 30th, with 90% of our program attending (9 out of 10 students)
2. We spent a lot of our meeting following up on recent meetings with faculty and the DGS. We don't have a handbook or advising guidelines. We discussed how to develop these, particularly in a small program where the DGS and the Chair are often the same person. We spoke about doing this in informal partnership with other departments with whom we are associated, as all students have a secondary association apart from Medieval Studies.
3. The teaching situation is extremely precarious, because medieval Studies doesn't have its own undergraduate courses.
4. On advising practices, in a small program, when someone goes on leave, there can be a problem handing off advising responsibilities; we spoke about how to facilitate that hand-off.
5. We also discussed the move to 320 York. One big concern is that we have a lot of books as a department, and 320 York has no room for books.
6. On doctoral survey results, medieval students really struggled. The program structure and size unsurprisingly lead to isolation and sometimes poor mental and physical health. We exceeded the average in terms of expressing feelings of isolation. One response we discussed was holding more frequent social events, and we are piloting two different programs: Medieval First Fridays, a breakfast of bagels or donuts in the department office to which partners are welcome, and the Medieval Studies Writing Study Hall, modeled after CTL writing halls. We're opening that up to other departments, on December 9 and 10.

VII. Miscellaneous

Lucy Armentano: If your department has released doctoral survey data, could you send that to lucylle.armentano@yale.edu or ryan.petersburg@yale.edu? We can't get access department-specific data

through GSAS. **Victor Bass:** We had a meeting with our Chair and DGS where they showed graphs, but the data haven't been shared.

Breanna Elliott (History): There will be a Yale-wide Disability Mixer this Friday, organized by the Graduate Student Disability Alliance. This includes the professional schools; GPSS will share information on Thursday digest, and there is information about the event on OrgSync. Please pass this information on to anyone who might be interested. It will be in Watson, this Friday from 7 to 9pm.

Megan Kelley (Neuroscience, GSA Service Chair): If you volunteered to manage a toy donation box, look out for an email from me about drop-off.

Nicolle Rosa Mercado: A reminder that we are still gathering information about Yale Health being unable to reach Puerto Rico numbers with a 787 area code. I'll send out an information-gathering form through the GSA Slack. **Devan Solanki:** This issue affects international students as well. **Nicolle Rosa Mercado:** Yes, OISS is sending a notice too. Puerto Rico isn't international but we've had some responses from students with PR 787 area code phone numbers already.

Maria del Mar Galindo: Jenette Creso, our Facilities and Healthcare Chair, has informed us that she will have to step down from her position next semester. We will be holding an election for this position soon; if you have nominations, or questions, please reach out to mariadelmar.galindo@yale.edu.

Meeting adjourned at 7.51pm.