

GSA Meeting

Feb. 7, 2006, 5pm

Stetson House

In Attendance: John Miller (*American Studies*), Dave Brown (*History*), Josh Beatty (*American Studies*), Meghan Revelle (*Computer Science*), Robert Painter (*Computer Science*), Tiffany Broadbent (*Computer Science*), Gwen Kennedy (*Public Policy*), Joanna Conder (*Public Policy*), Libby Neidenbach (*American Studies*), Ellen Adams (*History*), Robert Marmorstein (*Computer Science*), Fred Lumb (*Anthropology*), Pjerin Luli (*Physics*), Amber Hodge (*American Studies*), Jeffrey Pawson (*Computer Science*), Kristie Schmidt (*Chemistry*), Elise Larson (*Biology*), Lizzie Blake (*Biology*), Jim Deverick (*Computer Science*), Mimi Poe (*Psychology*)

John Miller called the meeting to order at 5:03pm.

The first order of business was that Dee Dee Hopkins, our secretary, graduated, so we are in need of someone to take her place. John asked for volunteers, and Dave Brown read the position's duties from the constitution. No one volunteered for the job, but anyone interested should e-mail John. Meghan Revelle took the minutes for the night's meeting.

The next order of business was health insurance. John started with a disclaimer that the e-mail he had sent to the department representatives should not be read into too deeply. The mandatory health insurance option is only that at this point, an option and nothing definitive. There are no immediate plans to adopt mandatory health insurance.

From the survey responses John has received from all of the graduate schools, 10% of graduate students are uninsured. Of the grad students that are insured, 60% have MegaLife, and those who do not have MegaLife are spending about as much as those with it.

The responses from the other graduate schools indicate that most grads are ambivalent about the issue. Arts & Sciences, VIMS, and education students are more generally for the mandatory plan, business students are about 50% for it, and the law students are against it.

The idea was raised that if/when a more definitive decision is reached about health insurance, there should be a "town hall" meeting to get the input and reactions of graduate students.

Robert Marmorstein said that he met with Christine Briton, the business manager of the health center. On February 23, the health center will meet with MegaLife to review possible plans. By March 10, they must pick and sign on a plan. If the policy is mandatory for all students, grad and undergrad, the premium could be \$300. If the policy is only mandatory for grad students, the premium would stay the same next year.

John had not heard the news of the March 10 deadline, so he will call Christine in the morning.

Amber Hodge asked if MegaLife was the only company we were talking to. John and Robert are meeting with another health insurance broker later in the week.

Pjerin Luli brought up the legality of mandatory health insurance. Jim Deverick actually called Richmond to ask about it, and there is no law for or against it. However, it has never been done with a company with more than 50 employees, and even then, there was the option to opt out of the coverage.

Jim gathered feedback from the computer science department, and 80% were opposed to mandatory coverage. He gave his compiled responses to John, and other departments are encouraged to do the same.

At 5:30, John called for a pizza break that lasted until 5:38.

After the break, Meghan gave an update on social events. We did not receive special event funding from Student Activities for a bus trip. The Graduate Council is planning a Spring Grad Bash in April. They are considering holding it at the Gradplex or in the Sunken Gardens. Meghan asked which location people preferred, and the general consensus was the Sunken Gardens.

We have \$300 to spend on a spring party in our budget. Meghan asked if people would rather have a smaller, alcohol-free Arts & Sciences only event or contribute our \$300 to the Graduate Council's Spring Bash. The idea of co-sponsoring the Spring Bash won out.

For a social/service event, Meghan brought up the idea of the GSA doing something for Spring into Action, an event coordinated by Volunteer Services. Student groups sign up for service projects in early April. The projects have not been announced yet, but they should be toward the end of the month.

Meghan also announced that on Monday nights, there are free swing dancing lessons at the Gradplex 800 building at 8:30pm. This coming Monday, the lessons are starting over from the basics, so it is a good time to start attending.

Pjerin gave an update on the Graduate Research Symposium. He stressed that this is our event to shine on this campus. The campus as a whole barely acknowledges or recognizes the presence and work of graduate students, so this is our opportunity to change that. The President and Provost will be invited.

We have received about 70 abstracts, an increase in the amount of participation over last year. Pjerin attributes the increase to the cash awards. The Symposium will be held March 24 and 25 in the University Center.

There will be a Symposium planning meeting on Thursday, February 9 at 6pm in Stetson House. Pjerin would like at least one person from each department to attend.

Josh Beatty gave his treasurer's report. He asked for approval to move money from our colloquia line item to the symposium line item to help with the Symposium costs. Approval was granted, capping the transfer amount at \$500.

The 2006-2007 budget was released. The GSA received \$2000 for colloquia, \$1800 for the Symposium, and \$500 for a fall party. John and Josh will be appealing the budget to try and get more money for the Symposium.

Libby Neidenbach is our new representative to the Parking Advisory Committee. She and Dave will be meeting with Wade Henley tomorrow at 3pm to discuss the reclassification of graduate students as staff during the summer. This would mean cheaper parking decals and better parking. If any one has parking concerns, they should contact Libby.

The final order of business of the evening was election procedure. Dave asked for volunteers for a subcommittee to explore how other graduate schools run elections and what might work best in Arts & Sciences. Robert, Gwen Kennedy, Meghan, Ellen Adams, and Elise Larsen volunteered.

The meeting ended at 6:18pm.