

ASG Graduate House of Representatives

Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2011

1. Call to Order (1:03pm)
2. Roll Call

Present: Representatives Justin Williams, Benjamin Chasin, Christian Cabazos, Elizabeth Wellings, Linda Wiatrek, Ricardo Videtta, Joni Schneider, and Christian McArthur.

Absent but excused: Representatives Kelly Gondek, Liz Hjort, Gail Nelson, and Kevin Burck

Others Present: Graduate House Advisor Dr. Paula Williamson

1. Approval of Minutes (1:04pm)

Motion to approve the September 23 meeting minutes made by Representative Williams, seconded by Representative Chasin, and approved unanimously.

1. Orders of the Day (1:04pm)

Representative McArthur moves to amend the agenda to put the “Old Business” items above “New Business”, within “Old Business” to place HBF 2 first, and to add to “Old Business” “E-mail quotas for graduate students”. Motion seconded by Representative Cabazos. Approved unanimously

1. Public Forum (1:07pm)

No one present for public forum.

1. Reports
   1. House Leader’s Report (1:07pm)

House Leader Videtta met with ASG Vice President Roemer about the issues discussed at the October 7 meeting. The ASG Budget has been approved with $1,658 for the Graduate House. The ASG does have an application in front of the Student Services Fee committee for additional funding; if the application is approved the Graduate House may get more money.

Vice President Roemer is in support of the Graduate House making changes to its page(s) on the ASG website. Any changes would first need approval from the Executive Branch. She would also like for the Graduate House to submit the name(s) of people who would be responsible for making those changes. Those individuals will need to go through the University’s Gato web content management system training before being allowed to modify the site.   
During the discussion about this issue, Dr. Williamson encourages having a staff member in the Graudate College who is already trained on Gato to be one of those people approved to modify the website. This person would serve as a backup for when there isn’t a person in the Graduate House already approved to make edits.  
Representative Wellings asks if we want someone already in the Graduate House to take on the role of editing the website, or leave it to House Leader Videtta or the Graduate College staff. This question went unanswered for now.  
Dr. Williamson will forward the name of the Graduate College Staff member to House Leader Videtta.

* 1. Secretary’s Report (1:14pm)

Secretary McArthur discussed the activities in the Governing Documents Committee. This includes an amended version of the Constitution having been sent out to the Graduate House as well as the rest of ASG. The committee is seeking input from everyone about any other changes that need to be made.

Secretary McArthur also provided a report of activities and announcements being made in the Senate over the last two weeks.

* 1. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

1. Old Business
   1. H.B.F. 2011-2012/2 “Code of Ethics Reimplementation Act” (1:26pm)

Representative McArthur gave a short author’s speech stating that changes to the Code of Ethics require approval from both the House and the Senate. This legislation includes changes voted on by the Senate at the end of the spring semester. The intent to bring this forward was to have the House approve those changes moving the amendment process along. The ASG Supreme Court has since ruled that approval in the House and Senate must occur in the same academic year. Therefore, if passed, these amendments would need to pass the Senate before May. In addition, it is unknown what changes, suggestions, or amendments the ASG Governing Documents Committee may recommend in regards to the Code of Ethics.

Representative Wellings moves to table the legislation due to concerns that the Governing Documents Committee has yet to review the Code of Ethics. It was seconded by Representative Williams. There was no objection to the motion and it was approved.

* 1. E-mail quotas for graduate students (1:28pm)

Representative Wellings mentioned that at the October 7 meeting there was discussion about troubles Graduate House Representatives were having with being able to save e-mails due to limited quotas. She contacted ITAC about the issue and asked the e-mail quotas for graduate students be increased to 260MB. Just prior to the meeting, Benjamin Rogers informed her that the request was granted. The increase in quota will occur automatically within three days and graduate students will not be required to perform any action for it to become effective.

Representative Wellings asks how we can inform students that this action has been taken. It was suggested that an e-mail can be composed and sent out to all of the graduate students, similar to the e-mail sent earlier in the year. It was also suggested that it can be an item that ASG President DeGarmo can include in his “Bobcat Update” e-mails. There was also discussion of informing the University Star about the news.

* 1. Graduate student alumni surveys (1:32pm)
     1. http://www.ir.txstate.edu/Reports/survey/grad.html

House Leader Videtta wanted to remind everyone that these survey responses can be a good resource for finding out what concerns need to be addressed.

1. New Business
   1. Supreme Court Ruling (RE: House Rep term length) (1:32pm)

Representative McArthur gave a short update about a request for interpretation sent to the ASG Supreme Court concerning the length of the term of a Graduate House Representative. The Supreme Court ruled that the ASG Constitution implies that House Rep terms are for a single year and every seat should be placed on the spring election ballot. While the Graduate House Rules of Procedure specifies a two year term, the Constitution takes precedence. Therefore, any current Grad House members who want to return in the Fall will have to run for re-election in the Spring or, assuming the seat is still vacant following the election, ask to be re-nominated and re-appointed to the seat. Representative McArthur, being on the Governing Documents Committee, is requesting a change to the relevant section of the ASG Constitution that would clarify term of office as being the two years stated in the House Rules of Procedure.

Representative Schneider asked for clarification from her position as she was just recently nominated by her Dean and appointed to her seat. Dr. Williamson stated that Representative Schneider can run for re-election in the Spring. Since it is rare that graduate students run for election, it is possible that during the summer, Dr. Williamson can contact the Dean and request that Representative Schneider (or any other Representative) be re-nominated for the position even if they do not run for re-election.

Representative Wellings asked for clarification of the situation. There was an inconsistency between the Constitution and the House Rules of Procedure. The inconsistency came to light during the previous ASG election when Representative McArthur noticed that both College of Science seats were up for election and he was under the belief his seat was secure. He asked ASG Advisor Kathy Weiser about the election ballot and she was interpreting the Constitution that all Graduate House seats are up for election every year. The Supreme Court was asked to provide an official interpretation of the governing documents in this matter.

* 1. Discussion of possibility of Saturday classes (1:44pm)

Representative McArthur said that the University administration has been discussing ways to handle the growing number of students on campus and the limited classroom space. One possible solution being looked at is to increase the number of classes offered on Saturdays. This possibility was discussed in the ASG Senate meeting earlier in the week. Representative McArthur said that Senators were eager to get the opinion of graduate students and the Graduate House, so he wanted to give the group the opportunity to give their opinions.

Representative Williams wasn’t aware there were not a lot of Saturday classes since his program offers them on a regular basis.

Representative Wiatrek was curious about the arguments against Saturday classes.  
Representative McArthur cited the Senate meeting arguments against as being mostly personal preferences with some concerns about athletic event attendance and bus availability.  
Dr. Williamson said the factors are really dependent upon a particular department’s needs and desires of their faculty members to teach classes on Saturdays.

Representative Chasin said that he thought Saturday classes might be of benefit to those students who work full-time jobs. Changing from a late night class to a Saturday class may be desirable for some of them.

Representative Schneider thinks there’d be enough demand for Saturday classes to make them viable.

Representative Videtta thinks having the option for classes on Saturday is important. Representative Williams agrees that taking classes on Saturday would be a choice to be made by the students.

Representative Wiatrek thinks this idea shows that the University is attempting to accommodate students and their schedules.

1. Questions (1:50pm)

Representative Williams read about the possibility of building a new golf pro-shop and driving range in the area of Spring Lake being part of the updated Campus Master Plan (CMP). He did not think this was a good idea when there is a desire to not damage the environment. He wanted to know who would be best to talk to about the situation.  
Dr. Williamson said that Nancy Nusbaum is in charge of the CMP. Dr. Williamson knows that Ms. Nusbaum is a supporter of sustainability, may provide good insight in to the decision making process and if there would be ways of changing these plans.

Representative Cabazos wanted to address the hours the library is open. The library closes in the middle of the afternoon on Saturdays and doesn’t open on Sundays until 1pm. She knows of a lot of graduate students who would prefer different hours (later on Saturday, earlier on Sunday).   
Representative Wiatrek pointed out that the library closes at 6pm on Fridays and is inconvenient for her sometimes.  
Dr. Williamson will check with Joan Heath, the Associate Vice President in charge of the library. Ms Heath has spoken with the Graduate House before and may be willing to visit again about this issue. In addition, the library is in the process of soliciting feedback about improvements and renovations to the library and that can be an additional topic.  
Representative Schneider asked if anyone went to the open forum the library had recently held for students. No one had.  
Representative Wiatrek also pointed out that there is sometimes not a quiet place to go to study in the library as even the “quiet floor” can be loud. Graduate students can get a private study room, but the waiting list is almost a year long.  
Representative McArthur mentioned that the current library hours are based upon a survey done with students. He thinks it would be important to learn more about the survey, the results, and what the demographic of those surveyed were.

Representative Chasin wanted to discuss parking on Fridays. Usually by the middle of the afternoon on Fridays, many parking lots are vacant. Students with commuter permits are still required to park on the far reaches of campus. He wondered if parking restrictions could be lifted sometime Friday afternoon before the current 5pm.   
Representative Schneider would like to see this since she has a lot of books to transport from her office to her car for the weekend. However, she gets a ticket if she parks too close to the building to early in the day.  
Representative McArthur suggested Representative Chasin contact Steven Prentice, the head of Parking Services, to get his opinion on the idea. That may provide an idea of how to approach making changes.

Representative Wiatrek asks how similar this idea is to the night parking permit proposed the previous year. The night permit idea was rejected by Parking Services because they felt it would result in a loss of revenue. Representative McArthur thinks this is a very different idea; the night permit was to allow for parking only at night, whereas this is a general regulation change about parking lot restrictions for all permits.  
Dr. Williamson suggested drafting a letter to the University Parking and Transportation Committee. They may be more effective in giving suggestions and taking action in terms of making surveys of parking lot usage on Friday afternoons.

Dr. Williamson wants to start planning for a Luncheon with the Deans and the ASG Mixer now that the budget is finalized. She first asked when would be best to schedule the luncheon. The general agreement would be to do it on Fridays only. There was a preference for doing it in lieu of a Graduate House meeting, but everyone was open to any Friday. For scheduling the ASG Mixer, Representative McArthur, who attends the Senate meetings, will get input from Senators about the best day/times for them.

Dr. Williamson also asked about the progress towards a plus/minus grading system.   
Representative McArthur said that the Senator who is trying to move this issue forward recently met with the Provost. The Provost is welcome to the ASG passing legislation supporting a plus/minus grading system and that legislation is moving through the Senate on that.   
There were questions about how the plus/minus system would work. Representative McArthur said that current proposal would have A and A+ both be a 4.0 with an A- at less than a 4.0. There was general dissention about this method.  
Representative Chasin asked if it is possible for the Graduate House to propose its own system even if it disagrees with the Senate’s proposal. The answer is yes.

Representative Wellings wanted to add some information about the possibility of holding workshops about presentations. The College of Fine Arts and Communications is open to hosting these types of workshops for graduate students. What needs to be known are if there are any specific needs for individual programs or colleges. This information will help in putting together more effective workshops.  
Dr. Williamson said that if/when these workshops are organized the Graduate College will perform the logistics of advertising the workshops and registering people. The department running the workshop (whether it is Communications for presentation workshops or the Library for copyright workshops) will still perform the actual workshop. The Graduate College just helps with the organization and legwork.  
Representative Wiatrek wonders if there could be workshops discussing professional ethics. Dr. Williamson said there have been workshops in the past from a research perspective so it is something that can be done.

1. Announcements (2:12pm)

Dr. Williamson reminded everyone that the International Research Conference will be in two weeks. If you register to attend the event, which is free, there is a conference bag and other goodies available. There were questions from multiple Representatives about when they will present their presentations and/or moderate sessions. Dr. Williamson will double-check on that, but the actual schedule and agenda for the conference is still being worked on.

1. Adjournment (2:14pm)

Representative Videtta moves to adjourn the meeting. It is seconded by Representative Wiatrek and unanimously approved.