

Graduate Student Association General Assembly Meeting Minutes Tuesday, Sept. 12 2006

I. Call to Order

The first meeting of the 2006-2007 school year was formally convened at 6:32 pm by President Debbie Lelekis. As representatives snacked on pizza and soda, they were asked to sign the attendance list with their names, department, and e-mail addresses; this information is used to update the listserv and departmental representative list (to be posted on the website).

II. Opening Remarks

The President of GSA, Debbie Lelekis, welcomed all representatives and passed out copies of the agenda. The other officers (Vice President Disraelly Cruz, Secretary Kate Hertweck, and Treasurer Xiong “Art” Peng) introduced themselves.

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the 9 May 2006 meeting were approved by representatives in attendance at that meeting.

IV. Special Presentation: Student health insurance and Student Health Services

Karen Davis-Gruen, an institutional research analyst for the Graduate School, spoke about several graduate life issues.

Student Health Insurance:

Eligible teaching and graduate assistants can have their health insurance subsidized. Chickering, part of Aetna, provides our insurance. There are two options for health insurance: Plan 1 and Plan 2. Be careful when choosing a plan, because Plan 1 has many limits on coverage, such as hospitalization charges. Karen encourages students to get Plan 2; although it costs more, the coverage is better. Plan 2 also includes prescription drugs; there is a \$20 copay for name brand and \$10 for generic drugs.

Dental insurance:

The newly available dental insurance includes 100% coverage of preventative care treatment, minor services are 80% covered, major services are 50% covered. The subsidy program does not cover dental insurance. The premium (\$336 per year) must be paid to Chickering, whereas regular health insurance can be charged to your student account.

Holly Kelley and Dana Briscoe, Patient Account Representatives from Student Health Services, answered questions with Karen about student health issues:

1. Students are charged the student health fee if they are a full time student. This fee allows students to use the Student Health Center as their primary care provider; referrals to other facilities must be made through the SHC.
2. How long does it take to receive the insurance card? A list is compiled weekly by the Cashier's office and is sent to Chickering; they take an additional 2-3 weeks to process. It helps to have a correct billing address.

3. There is no copay with the dental insurance for preventative procedures.
4. Call Chickering for more specific information about health insurance.
5. The dental insurance has an indemnity plan; all dentists in Columbia should accept it.
6. Students are allowed to change health insurance plans until Sept 29. Students are not allowed to switch plans midyear.
7. Register for health insurance through the Cashier's office.
8. Additional insurance questions can be directed towards Karen (GruenK@missouri.edu, 573-884-2326, 1-800-877-6312).

<http://www.missouri.edu/~gradschl/health/>

Fee waivers and the Tuition settlement scholarship:

Students at MU for several years are affected (i.e., they are receiving a settlement). MU was sued for charging students tuition when not in the University's bylaws. Many students believe the settlement money can be used for any school expenses, however, the settlement only covers educational fees. Students that have fee waivers do not receive a benefit. This judgement is from the University's lawyers; there's nothing that can be done to appeal.

<http://www.umssystem.edu/ums/departments/fa/tuition/>

Karen also spoke briefly about **income tax** and student income. Basically, no student should pay taxes on tuition money or fees that are paid by the university; as these are educational expenses, they cancel out.

<http://gradschool.missouri.edu/financial/feewaiver/tax.htm>

V. Officer Reports

Art Peng, GSA treasurer passed out copies of the **budget**. The carryover from last year was quite large, and we are still expecting allocations from the Graduate School (our main source of funding). Expenditures for the year include payroll for officers, departmental grants (none awarded last year but budgeted), travel grants (higher allocations), SGAA awards, banquet (more allocated), more money for food for meetings. Changes to the budget from last year reflect an expectation of increased representation at GSA meetings. The budget was approved.

Art next explained **changes to travel grant applications** and procedures. The updated application is available online. An employee ID is requested to expedite payment. More info about funding possible from other MU sources (dept, etc) is requested on the application. These changes are consistent with other groups that offer travel awards. An in-depth spreadsheet showing the deadline for each travel event as well as an FAQ is posted on the website.

Art fielded questions from various representatives about changes to travel grant requirements.

1. The average amount awarded per grant last year was \$150.
2. No money was awarded last year for just attending conference (no presentation). New changes this year allow up to \$50 for students that just attend conference.

3. The monetary amount and number of grants awarded also depends on allocations from the Graduate School.
4. The maximum amount awarded per grant is \$200.
5. These changes go into effect for travel this summer, although leniency will be allowed for the transition.
6. \$1253 in travel grants were awarded this summer.
7. Grants are accepted and approved on a rolling basis this year.

b. Kate Hertweck, GSA Secretary

Kate explained that the **listserv (GSA-ANNOUNCE)** from last year was retained and will be continuously updated as representatives are declared.

Several areas of the **website** are being improved. Under the “Resources” section, a list of websites are being added for easy reference to departmental graduate student organizations, campus graduate groups and resources, and national graduate associations. The Constitution will be updated to reflect the amendment passed at the end of last year. Corrections to current website content are welcomed; please e-mail Kate (klhm94@mizzou.edu). Any ideas about other useful website information? Current ideas include advice about graduate student housing or information about Columbia. The executive officers are also exploring ways of getting help with the website, potentially from computer science students, etc. The website for GSA is being changed to **gsa.missouri.edu**. This web address will be working concurrently with the old web address until the end of December at which point the old address will cease to function. Please update bookmarks, etc.

c. Disraelly Cruz, GSA Vice President

Disraelly described GSA as the voice of all graduate students. **Graduate Professional Council (GPC)** includes medical, law, veterinary, and other professional students, and is an umbrella organization for all graduate groups. The **Graduate Professional Leadership Council (GPLC)** is a quarterly meeting of the leadership of all graduate organizations on campus. Rather than describing the list of topics covered at the GPC and GPLC meetings, Disraelly summarized the major issues. University housing is still an issue for many graduate students. Resolving conflict due to disparities in stipends continues to be discussed. Increasing technological resources, like Bengal and e-mail account capacities, are also being explored. Disraelly welcomed concerns from anyone to share at these meetings.

Disraelly also spoke about the need for the reinstatement of membership and sector committees in GSA. The six sector committees (Behavioral sciences, Biological sciences, Humanities, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Social/Administrative sciences [as described by the GSA Constitution]) will help spread to and gather information from their respective sectors. The membership committee will be formed midyear and will help target departments that lack representation. These committees are needed to ensure graduate students

from all disciplines have access to information dispersed by GSA and to encourage participation in GSA activities.

d. **Debbie Lelekis, GSA President,**

Debbie described the **yearly goals and direction for GSA**. GSA is the only student group to have a representative on **Graduate Faculty Senate (GFS)**, which is the group that approves new programs and develops graduate student policies. GSA also provides grants for academic and professional development and organizes **Superior Graduate Achievement Awards (SGAA)**, which are awarded at the spring **banquet**).

Debbie stated that the yearly goals for GSA include academic development through the formation of the sector committees to aid in communication with the graduate student body. Work development will be explored through the formation of the **Graduate Assistant (GA) and Teaching Assistant (TA) concerns committee**. Debbie reiterated that the membership committee, once established, will help garner support from a variety of graduate student groups and will explore how to retain members.

VI. Announcements

- a. Kate announced that a **Post-Doc Regional Convention** hosted by the Post-Doc Association (PDA) will be held Sept. 21; an e-mail will be forwarded to the listserv about it.
- b. All representatives were allowed to voice any additional questions or concerns in an **open forum**. Several issues were clarified:
 1. The new travel grant rules apply to travel from this summer.
 2. The GSA budget comes from the Graduate School.
 3. Students can apply more than once a year for travel grants, but constraints on funding dictate the second award will probably not be forthcoming. Preference is also given to students that have not already been given a travel grant.
- c. The next GSA meeting will be at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, Oct 10 in Memorial Union N112.

VII. The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 pm.