

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA. GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL

General Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 8, 2009

I. Meeting called to order at 6:04pm by Bridget Barker

Present: Bridget Barker, Stephen Bieda, Boris Glebov, Sanket Unhale, Eirin Bareis, Alison Betts, Tim Chambers, Erica Cirillo-McCarthy, Jim Collins, Mabel Crescioni, Robert Jacobi, James Johnson, A. Quadir Khan, Jennifer Kruse, David Lopez-Negrete, Helena Morrison, Brittany Perkins, Kunal Ramani, Alan Schumacher, Lauren Sekora, Sarah Smith, David Talenfeld, Amanda Durbak, Jessica Gerlach.

Proxies: Emily Connally, Stephanie Levitt.

II. Introductory statements by President Bieda and President-Elect Talenfeld

Stephen Bieda – Recognized the presence of our newly-elected constituency representatives; acknowledged Pres. Shelton and thanked him for his time to visit us; Pres. Shelton has already attended our meeting twice. It has been a privilege to work with him on the issues facing graduate students and the University. The UA Transformation, State budget crisis, tuition and fee hearing are the reasons for Pres. Shelton's visit. Stephen stated the order of this meeting's agenda and gave the floor to GPSC President-Elect David Talenfeld.

David Talenfeld – Delivered welcoming remarks to the Council. David first thanked Stephen for his mentorship and recounted some of his advice: get a suit, shave regularly, don't screw up. The transitions we face will place unprecedented educational, infrastructural, environmental and administrative challenges upon us. These will also afford untold opportunities for those of us willing and able to serve our broader community. GPSC members are those leaders. We must deal with the challenges before us swiftly and wisely. We are fortunate to be in leadership positions at the best university in the fastest-growing State in what I think is the greatest country. We have significant work so let's do it.

III. Call to Audience (15 person limit, 2 minutes each)

Q: Hope Jones – Molecular Biology Dept., president of Associate Council at College of Science – We will continue fighting to maintain our rights, even though this shouldn't be our full-time job, it's Pres. Shelton's. One side of Pres. Shelton does this, the other side that we fear is the politician, negotiator. Personal background of speaker: she's a NIH fellow, PhD, mother. She came to give feedback and ideas on how to pay for education.

- Grandfather fees/increases in tuition
- Involve the community – e.g., the business leaders at a past ABOR meeting – have them fund games, etc.
- Students ought to have free parking.

A: Pres. Shelton: please pass me a copy of these ideas.

Q: Stephanie Mertz – English Graduate Union – PhD candidate in English dept. We fear that class sizes will rise, as GTAs we can't bear this. What will you do to ensure our contractual obligations to a .5 workload?

Q: Derek Adams – English Graduate Union – PhD candidate – We all contribute to undergraduates' education and we are willing to share in the responsibility, but the proposed fees undermine this. If GTAs are expected to absorb fiscal responsibility, then what about equitable cuts in the administration?

Q: Amanda Durbak – PhD candidate – GPSC does a lot for graduate students. Graduate students have a very specific need that is not filled by ASUA, e.g., travel grants (high numbers of applications recently). And yet, in terms of funds for student government, ASUA receives an inordinate amount higher than GPSC.

Q: Vincent Monage – Physics dept.– thank for your coming. We're all committed to the University. I'm having lunch with a prospective grad student. What can I tell him about his financial future if he should come here to UA?

Pres. Shelton has been keeping notes on the questions and will address them in the main body of his presentation to the Council.

Bridget Barker: reps will provide follow-up on during Q&A.

Q: Hope Jones – we need to bring the local community back into us. We should seek donations to support students at events; reach out to sponsors for events (e.g., Group 1 Foundation, Taste of Arizona, etc.). That's how we get the public to fund education.

Q: Chris – Molecular Cellular Biology – could you help us understand the macro picture? Why are these cuts a given? We're 50th in the nation when it comes to education.

IV. Address to GPSC by President Pres. Shelton

President Shelton – First, Pres. Shelton expressed that he appreciated the work of GPSC and Stephen who has always been on-task. He'll address the macro picture, then the political situation, and then go through specific questions.

The University has sustained a cut from \$440M to now \$363M. The dollars from the 18% are gone permanently. This is one of the highest cuts in the nation. We are anticipating a hit. The Administration and ABOR has communicated with the legislature to ascertain the maximum hit. It looks like \$100M for the system as a whole; UA gets a 40% share of that. The legislature appears to be signaling a \$56M cut.

As always, quality is our first criterion in dealing with this situation. If the cut goes beyond \$40M then we have to look for additional revenue. So, we have to deal with the prospect of \$16M in shortfall.

We still don't know for sure what will happen at the State level. The stimulus money has conditions attached to it. It was unclear before if the Governor would ask for all of it. Other States have declined taking it, including Texas and Louisiana. Shelton talked with the Governor a lot about how we're trying to maintain quality. The Governor is now asking for all the money we can get.

The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (“SFSF”) looks to be \$830M for education spanning K-12 and higher education. It’s up to the Governor’s discretion how to allocate these funds. It’s important to remember that these are one-time dollars and won’t build our core budget. They’ll help speed us through the pain but we still have to make some tough decisions. One of the conditions for the stimulus dollars is that we must maintain our funding at the ’06 level.

We can’t deal with this situation only with income; we’re trying to find the right balance. This is why the Administration talks with students about our options. ABOR have now allowed accepting up to 40% of out-of-State students. Right now we’re accepting about 30.4%. We are also considering the issue of merit-based scholarships in conjunction with need-based financial aid and how to achieve a balance.

We are still making our case at the legislature and we have some allies there. But the people driving the legislature don’t seem to see the need for public financing of education. And they don’t see the need from a philosophic basis. Every State is cutting back on public education; at the same time there are pledges not to raise taxes.

Talking about revenue, it looks like we will rely 40-50% on revenue-raising and the rest on cuts. The \$1,000 tuition increase will raise about \$20M. That leaves \$20-25M in cuts. Communicating with student leadership, Dean Comrie, Dr. Velez, we were leaning toward fees. These go specifically to areas that are important to students. They’re more traceable than tuition, not grabbed by the legislature like tuition. We already remit 40% of tuition dollars. In fact, there were some bills circulating to grab tuition.

Fortunately, we have allies in the legislature on both sides of the aisle. Next year, the State faces a \$3bn shortfall. Input is very important as we go through this process. We must be engaged, articulate and vocal.

Now we’re looking at a tuition surcharge instead of fees. We will set aside 20% for financial aid and the surcharge will stay in effect until some trigger (e.g., returning to ’08 funding levels). The conversation is fluid and there are many factors in play.

Q: what’s the difference between a fee and surcharge?

A: the fee goes directly to a specific purpose; the tuition surcharge is separate from the rest. It’s rescindable but the same.

Q: is the surcharge covered by tuition waiver?

A: yes, but we aren’t done working this out.

Q: will the surcharge go back to Phoenix first?

A: yes, a fraction will be remitted.

Q: what is the possibility of a fee waiver?

A: at this point, it’s undetermined.

Q: will there be differential cuts?

A: yes, we’re relying on SPBAC to help us decide to stop doing things that are mediocre. Reinvesting in some programs is possible but we need to wake-up to eliminating things we don’t need or do well. Some have already stepped-up for cuts. ABOR hasn’t yet taken action on eliminating programs.

Q: will the departments pay for the surcharge?

A: new tuition will be subject to existing tuition waivers. But we don't know yet what conditions ABOR will place.

Dr. Maria Teresa Velez: departments don't pay the waivers. The money comes from PIs and research grants.

Shelton: during the transition period, SFSF could be useful.

Q: is it the same for fellowships?

A: yes.

Q: will there be a surcharge and fees in the future?

A: there'll be another hearing in the Fall for Fiscal Year '10. We'll know better what the outcomes are from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act ("ARRA") and SFSF. Our budget for FY '10 will probably be \$363-333M; \$309M in gross collections. In terms of fundraising, last year was our best: we raised \$154M. We should be in the \$200-250M range. The economy is still affecting donations. We're aiming for increasing our endowed chairs, fellowships, and scholarships. The truth is we have a puny endowment. We have emphasized spendable money. It's impossible to fundraise our way out of this problem; we don't want to replace State moneys.

We do need to work harder on getting smaller donations. We have hired a new Alumni Association Director for this effort. We have about 215,000 alumni but only 8,000 are official members.

On the issue of class size – it's important not to minimize this concern. It's wrong for students to go above the standard. How to fix this is an open question. Admit more, more income, raise the stipend; chip-away at this through more income.

On the issue of past cuts – we have the Tuition Flow Taskforce, we're trying to continue making smaller cuts to Deans than to support staff.

On the issue of GPSC/ASUA – Shelton is unfamiliar with the specific numbers or respective funding but is open to having a sit-down and going through the issues.

On the issue of what to convey to prospective students – tell them what your experience has been. We undertook the Transformation Process to not eliminate things we do well as a land-grant university, we're looking to invest in the stronger programs and eliminate irrelevant disciplines. We don't need PhDs in every program. We need to promote our best departments.

a. Questions from Council, Answers from Pres. Shelton unless otherwise noted

Q: Lucy Blaney – Humanities is an important field. In it, students develop skills that are applicable in all areas. This propels our University mission as a world-class institution. We also have issues in the areas of increasing tuition and class sizes, health benefits, a demanding teaching and research schedule, time-to-graduation pressures, etc. How are we protecting the Humanities?

A: tuition funds flow will be good for Humanities. Stay involved as this progresses. Not all Humanities stay the same. For health benefits, it's difficult to get a bid for more benefits because we use them more extensively. We are continuing to push hard for this, however, at the legislature.

Q: Lucy Blaney – we also need to recognize the value of graduate students as instructors.

A: agreed. The quality of instruction doesn't depend on position, it's about commitment and passion.

Q: Robert Jacobi – how much have we saved from the Transformation Process, where are the savings of the Colleges of Letters, Arts and Sciences?

A: the best estimate by looking at the size of the administration is \$4-5M. Shelton doesn't have an estimate for the entire Transformation Process.

Q: Brittany Perkins – what is one thing that graduate students can do to help on this funding shortfall burden?

A: talk to your neighbors, friends, the legislature, the public about the importance that graduate education has to our State. We need to answer the question for the public that funding a public research university is worth it. Focusing exclusively on bachelor's degrees is a short-sighted disaster for Arizona.

Q: Brian Goforth -- ? (how is the University planning on using the stimulus money?)

A: it's undetermined now because not all the information on this is out yet and things are moving quickly. Shelton is in favor of using part of the SFSF to eliminate the forced furloughs.

Q: Tim Chambers – has the Administration considered sweetening the pots to keep faculty?

A: we created the 1885 Society to fundraise discretionary money and used it to create a competition for an endowed folding chair. It was a great success. Dr. Fasel from Engineering won it this year and we'll have another competition next year. We are pushing donors hard to endowed chairs. And yet, we're competing with universities like Berkley that received a donation from Hewlett for 200 endowed chairs. The ARRA and SFSF will provide very useful funding for one-time expenses to better our University, such as travel grants, labs, new data sets, etc.

Q: Alan Schumacher – why don't we favor merit- not need-based financial aid to bring the best and brightest?

A: it's a balancing issue of merit vs. need. We must keep it balanced because we need to represent a wide socioeconomic base. One idea Shelton favors is fixing the AIMS scholarship to fund meritorious students.

Q: Christopher Kiefer – what's the state of alumni recordkeeping?

A: these records are a problem. We have invested a recordkeeping system which should improve this issue. We try very hard when we have big events (e.g., Mars Lander, Basketball, etc.) to re-double our outreach. We are now not losing contact with new alumni.

Q: Helena Morrison – how will the surcharge be defined? This can impact our NIH applications because under their definitions guidelines, the NIH will pay 60% of tuition only.

A: nomenclature is a complex issue. Labeling the surcharge as tuition looks to be better for graduate students.

Q: Mabel Crescioni – what about the health sciences fees and tuition?

A: there is the possibility of a COM and nursing PhD fee.

Q: Alison Betts – our teaching loads impact our time-to-degree pressures since this time relates directly to the time we spend above FTE. It resembles an exploitative situation.

A: we are definitely undergoing a time of great strain and stress. Graduate students are an inexpensive source of labor and given the complexity of the situation we are open to working on this. [Extended colloquy between Shelton and students on details of workload.]

Q: Boris Glebov – what are your thoughts on the prospect of privatizing the University?

A: privatization can mean different things and there are different examples of how universities approach this, including Michigan, Virginia. In many cases privatization starts with professional schools under the assumption that these students can afford it. It's a balancing act between charging and ensuring access. We must weigh the societal and financial missions of a university. But, low tuition doesn't equal access; it is the high tuition/high aid model that works.

Q: Priyanka Sundareshan – we are focused on the quality of education, how do we build on business people's supporting it?

A: the ABOR January meeting had several business people speak during the Call to the Audience. They came at Shelton's request. In Tucson, there is a uniformity of understanding about the value of the UA. Phoenix is more of a mixed bag but there is a group of business people there who share valuing universities. At the same time the priority for some is simply low taxes. We have more work to do in Phoenix. We need to talk to the community. Arizona took a marked swing to the right politically. We do have a great ally in Rich Crandall. It's worrisome that some of the people in positions of power in the legislature don't see the value of public education.

V. Consent Agenda Item

- a. **Reading and Approval of Minutes: February 4, 2009 – deferred.**

VI. New Business

- a. **Workload and officer position descriptions**

Representatives will receive an email with this information so that they may run for officer positions.

- b. **Ratification of Constitution**

Roll Call Vote for adopting amendments as proposed by Executive Board:

Bridget Barker– aye
Stephen W. Bieda– aye
Boris Glebov– aye
Sanket Unhale– aye
Eirin Bareis– aye
Alison Betts– aye
Tim Chambers– aye
Erica Cirillo-McCarthy– aye via proxy
Jim Collins– aye
Emily Connally—abstain via proxy
Mabel Crescioni– aye
Robert Jacobi – abstain

James Johnson– aye
Jennifer Kruse– aye
Stephanie Levitt– aye via proxy
David Lopez-Negrete– aye
Helena Morrison– aye via proxy
Chizanya Mpinja– aye via proxy
Brittany Perkins– aye
Kunal Ramani– aye
Lauren Sekora– aye
Sarah Smith– aye
David Talenfeld– aye

Ratification passes.

c. Nominations for Awards

Nominate others and yourself for advocate of the year, representative of the year, or director of the year. Email Alison.

VII. Call to Adjourn

Stephen motioned to adjourn at 8:42pm. Seconded by Bridget Barker and passed unanimously.