

GPSC meeting minutes
June 7, 2005

I. Meeting called to order at 6:04 by Jennifer deWinter.

Present: Jennifer deWinter, Catherine Neish, Anne Murdaugh, Rebecca Kundberg (proxy for Leslie Walker), Sarah Grace, Randi Tanglen, Amanda Brobbel (proxy for Chris Brown), Pietro Valsecchi, Paul Thorn, Mel Engel, Jim Collins, Beth Specker, Nick Amatuzzi, Elaine Ulrich (proxy for Nadia Sylvestry Rodriguez), Stephanie Vie.

Call to adjourn:

Call to the audience: Elaine is going to introduce guests visiting us today. We have two guests today, Andrew Record and Fernando Ascencio, who are the ASA directors that will be serving this year. ASUA president Cade Bernsen appointed them. There is also a new graduate student ASA director seat that couldn't meet with us today.

Andrew and Fernando note that they hope this is not a one-time deal (sitting in on the meeting). They hope to be able to basically get our perspective on things, to learn more about GPSC issues and hope to approach us on ASA issues.

We have three new directors to appoint:

1. Mel Lynn Engel, not officially appointed yet but will work as Grants and Appropriations Director.
2. Stephanie Vie, acting as secretary and not appointed yet as Communications Director.
3. Amanda Brobbel, hoping to be installed as Administrative Director.

Elaine: I just wanted to welcome them.

Jen deWinter: Hopefully everyone got the minutes. If you are not on the listserv please let us know so we can get you on there. Have the minutes been read? Any motions?

Amanda motions; 2nd by Pietro.

Amanda: There is one correction: "there was a belief discussion of the topic." Should be brief.

Jen deWinter: Minutes approved.

President: We have a couple items to discuss—first I want to announce the new Vice President of Research, Leslie Tolbert. We are very excited about that. She is an excellent candidate, also the head of graduate education. So that's why it's important to keep up with that and have a relationship with her. Amanda was on the committee for the top 3 candidates. Leslie will be appointing a new person to replace Tom Hixon as Dean of the Graduate College.

FICA: Brief explanation of whole situation... Essentially, FICA is a tax that helps pay for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid. Typically, students are exempt. Over the past 8 years, though, we've (UA) been out of compliance. We haven't had graduate students who worked during the summer pay FICA. We were audited. Now we're getting charged. Here's how FICA works. If you take a break longer than 5 weeks and are not enrolled, you are no longer exempt by way of being a student and then you have to pay FICA. Elaine did a peer survey and the only way we can be exempt is if graduate students enroll in 3 credits (750 dollars each session) each session. We can only work ¾ time, too, if enrolled. This is very problematic. The only way out is to pay a huge amount of tuition and lose hours of working. We did a

survey of our peer institutions, and a couple had policies such that grad students taking 1 unit of 900-level (MA thesis, dissertation, Independent studies) maintained their status for FICA exemption. Elaine lobbied and got support from Dick Powell's office (he is the current VP for Research and Graduate Studies). Taking the 1 credit of 900-level ends up being \$500 but for some people, FICA could be above \$1000. The ¾ time limit still applies. As of yesterday the controller said "I don't like that. I don't want them to enroll and work full time." The university never considers us employees so we have no benefits during summer. We're students but we can't work and enroll. This is a problem that we will continue to work to change. The university has to match the amount of FICA funds we pay in, so it costs them money. The controller was kind of hasty in his decision; if the university knew about the savings, then they may change their minds. We're still working on that. We will get the 1 unit requirement probably, rather than the 3 unit one. We had hoped to have it ready for SSI, but unfortunately it's not ready. So this will be more for SSII or next summer. Dorian has agreed to waive all late fees so that if students enroll late for SSI, then they are exempt from those fees. If you don't enroll in SSI, then you will be charged back FICA fees.

Beth: Does that apply to our next paycheck?

Jennifer dW: No. It will apply even if you work during summer, but you can only work ¾ time.

Amanda: You always pay FICA anyway. It's separate for most people hired for summer. It's mainly affecting the RAs who work during summer. If you were a SS instructor, you paid FICA.

Elaine: A lot of departments hire many RAs for the summer. They're affected the most.

Randi: How much is it?

Elaine: For full time, \$600-1,200. It's significant. And when you're talking times a few hundred students it's not a small amount of change. Dropping to 1 unit is consistent with previous changes the university has made. One big concern the university has is that it wants to make sure it doesn't look like tax evasion. But they refuse to make us employees, just give us student status.

External affairs/Paul: There was an email regarding HR130 that was sent about 2 weeks ago. It was about graduate tax. Did people get that? I just wanted to point out that it's legislation that helps all grad students (all students really) who get loans, Pell grants, scholarships. Go to the AMSA webpage to fill out the info and you'll get to send a message to your congressman. Please do it if you haven't. Over 3500 of us nationwide through the AMSA site have already done so.

Jen and I had a productive meeting. We talked about our governing documents. We talked about the structure of the GPSC internal committees.

There was a survey undertaken by James and the Strategic Planning Committee at the end of spring semester, the end of April. I made up a summary of the survey results and will hand it out and talk about it briefly.

Question 4 is a little biased towards RAs/TAs

Most people want merit aid/need aid for graduate students

15% of all UA in-state tuition goes to financial aid

Amanda and I talked; we don't know where that money goes

Elaine will be meeting with Dorian about that. How will it be distributed?

Jen dW: Also, how is it publicized?

Elaine: Good question. We'll find out.

Jim: The non-degree seeking students, none of them can apply for aid. Basically, you have a BA but you're taking graduate classes w/o being in a program. People have an interest in a topic, or do it to get into a department.

Beth: So these people want financial aid to pay for those classes?

Jim: 3 years ago, tuition increased. The college said, "Yes, we'll increase tuition but we're increasing aid too." But these non-degree seeking students can't apply for aid. A lot go on to a program and become degree-seeking. But if they have no money to do the non-degree seeking part of it, then they might not get in later to a program.

Amanda: It does impact students, we just don't know how much.

Jim: And foreign students can't apply, can't work off campus.

Elaine: And our foreign student population is about 20%. Included with non-degree seeking students, that's about 45% total population of graduate students that are having difficulty getting aid.

Amanda: We do have a new program where international students can come on campus if they are not accepted at CESL. So there's a new non-degree seeking international students category.

Elaine: Is that just here at UA?

Amanda: I don't know. It's a new program here. But I don't know what that does to the visa situation.

Beth: So they have to enroll in CESL to take English classes?

Elaine: It is good for spouses to get into programs.

Paul: Back to the survey. Health insurance is 3.94, which is kind of high. But it's a strangely worded question. If health insurance was an issue, I'm sure it would be a 5. In the additional comments portion of the survey, the most common concern was about health care—prescription coverage, dental, optical.

Elaine: We now have optical covered.

Amanda: They don't tell you, because they don't want you to use it. Also, they will provide you with lists of dentists who will work on payment plans. Ask; go to campus health and they'll tell you.

Paul: There is an interest in daycare; it only got a 3 but I imagine it's more valuable to people than the numbers represent. And people in comments mentioned it.

Elaine: It is interesting that people know about travel grants but not POD.

Paul: Well, it's going to be self-selecting, who fills out the survey.

Randi: How will we use these results?

Paul: Health care is always a concern. The contract isn't up for negotiation until next year. Changes can only be through mutual agreement with the company.

Amanda: The regents select the plan. They will next year ask for bids from providers. United was the only one interested last time, because it was not successful last time. The negotiations didn't go very well. But the plan has been doing better. So now we're in a better position. We hope to get prescription coverage next time.

Elaine: This isn't up till next year, but knowing it's important, we should work to get a survey out to grad students this year to give us time to work on getting it into student/administration awareness.

Paul: We will work with Campus Health to let people know about the services available to them.

Amanda: When premiums jump 1%, people drop. And the premiums increase. International students are forced to enroll. Well, it's automatic, not even forced. They are forced to pay the premium. You can petition but most aren't let out of it.

Elaine: We can try to get more involved this year and we can put together a committee. Health care issues seem very important to grad students.

Amanda: When I spoke about it to ABOR last fall, Regent Calderon said he'd be happy to help.

Internal affairs/Jennifer dW: Constituent meeting will be held early in the fall next year. They are a required responsibility for the reps of each college. You're given a budget to hold meetings. Members of your groups, deans, anyone with a vested interest in student affairs should go. The officers started going last year with their representatives and, accompanied by 1-2 officers, they listened to the concerns of constituents. We came away with lots of info. We decided to have the meetings late in the year/term. So we think if we have them earlier, more people will come. For one, there is less stress and also officers can attend the meetings without being too overwhelmed.

Elaine: It helps us understand what's on the radar.

Jen: So that's where to do the healthcare survey. You have an audience with immediate feedback. In the next month or so I'll send something so that you, as your college rep, can reserve your room. There's a \$50 budget I think.

Paul: We can discuss and fix the budget if needed. Last year, James bought cookies and soda.

Jen: Reps, send this to listservs, publicize it. It will take some time to get interest but hopefully they will come.

Paul: For some colleges, SBS and science, maybe meet with the dean first to discuss topics beforehand.

Beth: You can bring the dean to the meeting? That helps?

Jen: It seems to.

Amanda: People like to talk in front of the dean.

Jen: There's a bunch of you and they don't know your name.

Elaine: Additionally, I will work w/Stephanie to get grad student issues in consciousness. We want to get issues in their minds before the meetings.

Jen: Please start brainstorming issues specific to your college and to grad students in general

Amanda: Even within your college you'll have differences. So it's important to bring those to the table. We need to know what are the differences within your college so we know what issues are important.

Jen: We're hoping to have them 2 weeks in, in the first month of the semester. One other thing to talk about--committee work. Everyone on the council needs to be on one internal committee and one external committee. To a large degree, your external committee will be decided by what internal committee you're on. We'll choose at the next meeting, 3 wks from now. There are 5 internal committees.

President's: (can't choose this one)

External VP (Paul): Student Life & Outreach committee

Internal VP (Jen): Administrative Affairs committee

Treasurer's: Club and POD grant committee

Co chair: Creating student surveys for constituent groups and academic affairs

Think about what you're interested in, and from there you get an external committee, which you report to your internal committee. So for the next meeting, look up on the website and rank your top 3 choices

We're going through a constitution review. Most are grammar things. You'll see it on email next week. We will vote on it at the next meeting. We want feedback on differentiation right now between "directors" and "staff." We have no staff, really. All jobs given to staff are now director jobs. So, let's get rid of "staff" language. Directors are staff. This isn't a voting thing, but if you are invested in keeping the word "staff" then let me know. Anyone want me to not change this?

Jim: I think we should. But would it preclude the availability of staff in the future?

Jen: No, we could add it in the future but we don't need it currently.

Paul: So do we have to call everyone that we hire a director?

Jen: Yes, but do we need to have them in the constitution if we have someone short term?

Jim: We've had in the past office help or other short-term things. There were occasional problems—people would not work but got money, that sort of thing. So we needed procedures in place to deal with that.

Jen: I imagine that right now staff members don't need to be ratified. Directors, yes, since they work closely with what we do.

Treasurer/Nick: I have nothing to report. I will work with Paul to transfer from him being treasurer to me being treasurer.

Paul: Not much happened. We have \$1000 available.

The secretary is not here. Administrative director reports?

Mel: I just want to say I am glad to be here; it's amazing that grad students don't realize all the time we put in.

Amanda: I want to talk about grad orientation. I take over for Danielle July 1. Danielle's last day is June 30. So she's still on clock and started planning grad orientation. So I'm included and I've been working with her. I was involved last year so it's not difficult. There is more info this year because Dr. Velez and Jack Roberts in the graduate college gave us more this year. This year we need a theme. We should keep it basic. "Tools for success in your grad career?" It's not intended for every graduate student, primarily those new to the UA campus. Students in the English department can't attend (because they have a week and half long orientation for TAs) so many people miss out on it for similar reasons. Think about audience when putting together theme. Shirts could identify us as part of a particular year or group. We want the theme to be relevant but not too irritating. We don't have to decide now. We need to order t-shirts by early July so we have a month or so. We can vote if wanted. You can make me responsible for it. Thanks for suggestions already made. Vendors will be in the north ballroom. Presentations will be in the south ballroom.

Jen: Can we bring in vendors that give things away (i.e., food)?

Amanda: We can't give away food. But we can give out coupons. I'll send a list of who's invited already to the listserv. Some will just give items for our raffle.

Elaine: Have we done anything with radio stations? We could have music with lunch.

Amanda: We'll see if it's allowed.

Beth: CESL's done it.

Amanda: We need topics for sessions. We need to get the list on the website so grad program coordinators can get this out to new students.

Jen: Should the library just do info on the department subject specific pages? That might be more useful.

Beth: CCIT should talk about OSCR and MLL.

Jen: And that Thursday is free printing day.

Amanda: CCIT will have a table at the fair. Should we have a full session of breakouts on CCIT? In the past, one problem is people sit there for 3 hours and listen to one thing. In previous years, people could choose sessions. If you only have one extra room, you can only have 2 other breakout sessions. So you have to have enough rooms to have breakout sessions. We don't have a lot of options, like the Rincon room is already gone. Rooms have to be relatively of the same size. We wanted 6 breakouts of 45 minutes each. We probably will have 4.

Jim: We should have someone from the registrar's office come and talk about additional fees, have campus police and talk about the tickets and stuff, 30 min with 5 min each about who's going to rip you off.

Amanda: We will have a handout in the packet; get people on stage, they will talk forever.

Jim: Every time I have a constituent problem, the department says yeah, we have a lot of people with this problem. I think it would be helpful.

Amanda: Would that be "everything you wanted know but was afraid to ask"?

Catherine: The mentor and mentoring session wasn't helpful.

Amanda: But most departments don't do it, even though it is required. This is a big problem w/ departments not being in compliance, and the grad college doesn't want to interfere. My thought—people need to learn about how to make contact with faculty members regularly who will then write letters and things. They need to know this early on. I should know about sessions that weren't useful so we can change them.

Jen: Can you find a grad student to give the mentoring talk?

Jim: Maybe give speakers lists of suggested topics.

Amanda: This is August 15, a Monday, for the GO. Starts at 9 am but registration opens at 8:30. We need volunteers on that day. See the handout for volunteer opportunities.

Jen: Can you send a list of what is planned to be in the FAQ sheet?

Amanda: We need some new flyers to describe them. This will be a communications director thing.

Elaine: We need to think about “when I first got here what did I want to know?” We need practical info.

Rebecca: How is this different from our college's orientation?

Jen: Some departments don't do them. Humanities doesn't; SBS also possibly.

Amanda: If your college does it, then your needs are probably fulfilled, but many don't.

Elaine: Put something in about the constituent meetings.

Jen: I will try to plan them early enough to include them.

Jim: I went down to talk to the rec center people to find out about fees, what they're for. I was told that the population will be increasing and the rec center is already overloaded; we will need additional facilities. I never got more info though. I asked how many grad vs. undergrad students use the center—she said a lot. Asked about scanned cards and she threw out numbers, how many grad students came at least once. This was not really useful. 75% of people on campus used it at least once, that sort of thing...do we have repeat user info? I wasn't convinced that they couldn't do something similar for less money.

Beth: The pool size, the main room, those can't be increased in size?

Jim: They're talking about building a bigger room.

Jen: Why isn't revenue from increased students enough to cover costs?

Amanda: It's only going to be charged (a fee) for two years.

Elaine: More likely a small permanent fee will help fund that and do maintenance. My concern is that there has been no survey of students of what they want to see. Things like a separate workout area for women, or a faculty locker room. More changing rooms.

Pietro: Instead of building a new structure, they should create things around the campus where you can get a discount or something.

Beth: That's a problem for students without transportation.

Elaine: It has been brought up; too complicated is what they say.

Pietro: It just seems less expensive than building a new building.

Amanda: Saundra Taylor is leading towards asking students to vote on permanizing the fee. Our current fee will expire soon.

(someone asked) Can you opt out of it?

Amanda: No. The bond fee, you can't opt out of. It's \$20. You can refuse to pay the \$3 user fee. If we vote on a fee this fall that we would never pay, then the students who would benefit would be later on in future. We shouldn't vote on things that affect future students.

Jim: This is all based on increasing enrollment.

Elaine: Do they advertise other hours off peak?

Amanda: Not really.

Mel: There is data in higher ed on auxiliary services, which are usually losing money for the university. It deals with the rec center and fees. You should be able to look at the comparison across the US and look at that data.

Jen: Any other representative reports before we swear in directors?

Paul: We don't have to swear them in; just vote. The communications director is chosen by me but you have to ratify it. Jen appoints the appropriations and grants director (Mel). The Administrative Directors (Amanda) is appointed by the officers as a group. Research & Policy isn't filled yet.

Elaine: We are reopening the search. Our first and second choices didn't accept.

Jen: Do we want to vote in one group?

Paul: I will motion to vote them in as a group.

Jen: I second. Any discussion or questions?

Elaine: I'm excited about working with the newest directors.

Randi: So we're basically saying we support the officers' decision?

Jen: You can ask them questions if you like.

Elaine: Paul, Nick, and I interviewed the three that are here. Each had an interest in the job but had a personal interest in the job also. They felt that they could provide a service but also receive something. This led me to feel that they will do an excellent job. I got that feeling from each of them.

Jen: The communications director is doing writing and documentation, has done copy editing at the *Wildcat*. Mel brings experience with 25+ Cats and monetary funds. Amanda was a previous president, so had knowledge of the GPSC.

Elaine: I was surprised at how good the candidates were. Each had skills and passion.

Jen: All in favor of approving the three directors? (All ayes) Okay, the ASA debriefing...

Paul: Should we postpone that?

Jen: What is our plan for email distribution?

Paul: I got comments about too many emails. So I tried to formulate a plan to get stuff out without too many emails. This is not just a strategy, but also having it written down.
See the handout for more info

Elaine: If we can have reps find out about the listservs or ways to contact their constituents, that would be good.

Paul: Presumably over time such a list will improve. I'll send a request for people to send me listserv addresses and so on. Does everyone think it's a good idea? (All ayes)

Jen: I covered governing docs already. Ok, so ASA debriefing. Paul will talk about what ASA is.

Paul: ASA is the Arizona Students Association and GPSC is not part of ASA.

Elaine: ASUA didn't want to give up one of the four seats; they wanted a new seat to maintain the 4. Unfortunately they maintained the ASUA president should be the person to choose. Amanda was the at-large rep with hundreds of votes; she applied. Elaine applied. Paul applied. We were all rejected. They had 3 candidates from GPSC who were strong. They went with a law student who was on ASA but he can't be an alternate for GPSC because he is in the law dept ... any other dept and he could have spoken at our meetings. They chose someone from a department who was least able to represent us. They felt that because he had previous ASA experience, he'd be a good lobbyist. But we fear he will save the ASA agenda and ignore GPSC concerns.

Jen: He can easily ignore the departments such as Humanities.

Elaine: ASA is a lobbying group for state of Arizona. It has student reps from all the student bodies, student governments, NAU and UA except for GPSC.

Beth: Does the grad student body at ASU and NAU have a seat?

Elaine: ASU has it for their campuses. There are no females from UA on ASA

Paul: ASA is a private statewide student advocacy association which serves as a student forum for discussion and a jumping point for student lobbying of ABOR. It was established in 1974, funded by a \$1/semester student fee. You can request your \$1 back
Major issues: student voter registration and AFAT (Arizona Financial Aid Trust).

Elaine: 81% of grad students are out of state.

Paul: The ASUA president automatically has one seat. ASUA pre-appoints 1 graduate student and 3 other UA students. Why would UA grads be served by having a rep of the GPSC on the ASA? It is a great opportunity to work with student leaders from across state. GPSC would gain greater access to ASA resources. Participation on ASA would provide incentive for GPSC to have more interaction with ABOR. How can we change the appointment process? We would have to change ASA bylaws or change ASUA bylaws. ASA bylaws can be changed with the ASA president's consent; bylaws of the ASUA can be changed by a majority vote of the ASUA undergrad senate.

Elaine: Grad students can't vote for ASUA senate.

Amanda: Grad students just don't feel represented by ASUA. So they don't vote.

Paul: Why won't ASUA let grad students choose the rep to ASA? Officially, the claims are that the ASUA president would be likely to choose the best rep, and that UA contingent to the ASA must speak with a unified voice.

Elaine: I was asked to participate in the selection process if I removed myself from the running. Cade Bernsen didn't have to do that though. It was disappointing that we didn't get on there but we will continue to work towards that in future.

Amanda: Only 60 grad students voted in the election while 650 grad students voted in the GPSC election. So we put my name forward because of that fact. It makes an important political statement when they reject me--that they refused to choose someone elected by grad students to represent them.

Rebecca: What was the responsibility of our reps last year? I would have spoken out had I known.

Amanda: We had a lot of contact with everyone we could in order to effect change. Two years ago, basically, the grad students tried to get them to create a grad student seat at UA, specifically appointed by GPSC. The ASUA contingent said they wouldn't vote on it at all. It's a constant thing.

Paul: Previous negotiations for this fell through at the last minute.

Jen: We will have to table this for the next meeting. I call to adjourn.

Paul: I second.

Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Vie (acting secretary)