

# THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA. GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL

Transformation Plan Emergency Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, October 1, 2008

## I. Meeting called to order at 6:09 pm by Bridget Barker

**Present:** Stephen Bieda, Boris Glebov, Bridget Barker, Emily Connally, Jed Laver, Jill Burris, Stephanie Levitt, Lauren Sekora, Robert Jacobi, Sanket Unhale, Erica Cirillo-McCarthy, David Lopez-Negrete, David Talenfeld, James Johnson, Tim Chambers, Roeland Hancock, Tiffany Goforth, Sandra Nameth

**Proxies:** Alison Betts, Helena Morrison, A. Quadir Khan, Brittany Perkins, Chizanya Mpinja, Jim Collins

## II. Call to Audience - none

**III. Guest - Dean Andrew Comrie:** We have a budget crisis on our hands, we know we will have more cuts. Centrally have made many cuts across campus to try and chip away at the deficit. Good programs as well as poor programs are asked to cut corners. Small chips start to affect excellence. The only real management solution is to pick fewer things and make sure we can do those correctly. The challenge now is what to pick. One way to do it is look at whole university and chop off limbs of the tree. Problem is that you need many limbs to be a comprehensive research university. The other way, what Provost Hay has proposed, is to design a new university, looking at strengths, ways to reconfigure ourselves in interesting and exciting ways. Analogous to fine arts school change, have sort of professional feel to four schools, no more departments. We now have known niches within disciplines and are looking to naturally realign some of the things we really do well into boxes to make them more strategic. We were told to go forth and organize, not so much to get people to hold on but see what strategic angles people can come up with. The whole transformation notion is to get some synergy, streamline undergraduate education and cross cutting graduate courses, to get marginal savings. The first part won't be hugely dramatic, it is way to make ourselves more strategically positioned so we can excel at things we're good at to avoid the current trajectory to a death by a thousand cuts, where everything decreases. a system that is not really an option anymore.

The transformation plan is on a fast track. By the middle of december we plan to have a proposal to go to faculty senate and then to start implementation in the spring. The other option is torture like we are going through now for even longer. The quicker we can get to certainty the quicker it can calm down.

So what's in it for grad students? Better, stronger programs with better sustainability and less cuts. The transformation doesn't mean we will lose. any program, even threatened programs' grad students get to continue and finish. Mostly right now the discussions are about where faculty salaries are, and grad programs exist semi-independently of faculty salaries.

Q: Robert Jacobi: Faculty salaries are under question. Do you think provost will try to reduce the number of tenured faculty?

A: This is a challenge: it is hard to get rid of faculty. The way tenure is set up, we usually must first cut funding to a department, and then for individuals for whom that new focus is not as good a fit, they tend not to want to hang around and may or may not leave on their own accord. Are you asking can she just say she will lay off faculty?

Q: Robert Jacobi: I was thinking of trying to cut salary. faculty rearrangements do not affect programs in a structural way, but if faculty leave we are affected.

A: Some money is reserved for faculty retainment. This is an issue regardless of transformation. The process likely will not impact faculty because it is so hard to get rid of faculty because of tenure. The biggest effect will likely be on on staff due to reorganization of the administrative aspects. This does not mean wholesale firing. but does mean attrition or lines that do not get filled.

Q: Robert Jacobi: Does the university have retention funds for grad students?

A: That is the departmental function, once they retain a student, it is ultimately the student's decision to study here. If it is a good student and someone is wanting to hang on to them, we can make plans. The student will do best where they want to have an education If you have TA support, it is not threatened. These answers really depend on the situation. right now, resources are through the programs or departments, either PI grants or TAships, each funding source must make sure those resources are employed in best way.

Q: Stephen Bieda: We receive many questions about degree names, is there a grandfathering program

A: Degree names are separate from department names, set by ABOR, and changing degree names takes ABOR decision. The degree and major, stay the same, even if the department changes. The name of the degree is for marketing and packaging, it is appealing to students, a stamp for students, many conventions on disciplines and names.

Q: Boris Glebov: What is your feeling on post tenure reviews and is this process being used effectively?

A: Faculty are reviewed annually, usually by a committee of 3, assess CV, see if they published, are teaching, or are generally productive. The parts of this process I see I think works very well, but it could work better. I am not an expert on this, so you should ask the provost or somebody else for more details. Could there be more change happening on a live interactive basis annually? Yes. Would that give us dramatic savings? No. Most faculty are working quite effectively. Is there dead wood? Yes. Are we minimizing it as much as possible? Yes, but can always find more ways to tweak the system. Anyone in any job should do the job justice.

Q: Boris Glebov: Is it possible to cut student stipends? My impression is that there is a state mandate about how much we have to spend. How much more can be refused before we approach legal limits?

A: My sense is that undergrads who get financial aid more than take care of that limit. I don't think it is an issue because we aren't going to try to be a research institute with no students. Biggest variety is in soft research grants.

Q: Boris Glebov: The idea is circulating to make all degrees interdisciplinary. In that case, would there be unified progression framework instead of each having its own?

A: No, every program has its own culture, if we make them the same here, we put the graduates at a disadvantage nationally. That is the reason some people can earn twice as much as people in other disciplines. The point is that requirements, not culture, should be equal across disciplines. Do we want to reduce time and increase percentage of students getting degrees? Yes, but not in granular ways. The average campus PhD has a 57% completion rate in 10 years. Some programs have 25% completion in 6 years. In general, this is a national embarrassment, the whole nation does it. Some departments, like pharmacy, have 85% in 6 years. some degrees take longer, etc. We have to look at who is completing the programs when, and why.

Q: Tim Chambers: Academics say "we're doing work." What is administration doing to explicitly cut costs, are there any plans to do something?

A: Administration has an analogous process, it started about a month behind this one. Personally, I did a 5% budget cut, laid off 2 people. Most academic colleges had 2% cut. The crisis is tough because in some areas, more administration is needed, for example, in the sciences, human subject, animals, federal compliance, we need real people to do more and more stuff for the feds, administration makes the whole machine work.

Q: Robert Jacobi: Is grad college actively involved in GIDP proposal?

A: Don't know of individual proposal like that. I haven't seen a white paper. The model for the current interdisciplinary program is the UC system. Many programs line up exactly with departments, so when it comes to resources, the resources go to program first anyway. I don't know that it would save a dollar, it would just change it to who reports to whom. It just allows programs not aligned within system to exist.

Q: Robert Jacobi: Any proposal coming from your office?

A: We have a proposal, but with no faculty lines so no reason to deal with it. Other programs. our proposal says we are waiting to see where faculty are to see where program should go, it is less of a proposal from me, trying to inform people of options and get rid of urban myths like departments must have programs in their own unit.

Q: Sanket Unhale: How can this affect international student enrollment and completion? Is that going to cause trouble from a visa point of view. Government is pickier now, is that in consideration as this moves on?

A: Degree titles, as opposed to department names, are less likely to change. This should be no different from international to national students.

My general message: Don't panic, not about to switch everyone's names, those are sensitive to market. First and foremost our concern is about where the jobs are.

#### IV. Webmaster approval

Emily Connally moved to push approval of the webmaster candidate, Moksh Matta, to an agenda position before officer reports. Dave Talenfeld seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Q: Boris Glebov: which distribution of linux do you use?

A: Do not use it often, but Fedora.

Q: Stephen Bieda: what would you like to do differently on our website?

A: Make it more interactive, perhaps more video. If someone would like to go to the gpsc office, they could see the location of the office, and maybe a map. Aesthetically, the menu is not in a proper place.

Q: Boris Glebov: What is your previous experience?

A: I have an undergrad degree in computer science. I used html during my schooling but have not used it in a position before.

Q: Lauren Sekora: Why do we need to have continuous validation of html, whatever you're reading?

A: That is something I do not know about, i will have to look into.

Robert Jacobi moved to approve Moksh Matta as the GPSC webmaster. The motion was seconded by David Talenfeld, and carried with no abstentions.

#### V. Officer Reports:

**President** – *Stephen Bieda* – (1) Quite a number of proposals are out there. See where you feel students in your program would benefit the most. Keep up with as many proposals as possible, to ascertain where you may be moving. I have seen rough drafts, once I get final, will break them down and send to specific representatives.

Q: Erica Cirillo-McCarthy: how are you getting access to these proposals? can we get them?

A: Adminsitrators send them to me.

Q: Robert: as far as I know, these should be public. AZ daily star tries to get them as soon as possible. Can potentially start coming in this Friday.

(2) College of Business and Public Administration and Fine arts have special elections. College of Fine arts has a tie. Next week will be doing a runoff.

**Vice President** – *Boris Glebov* – (1) The internal policy committee met. I tried to talk about GPSC white paper. Conclusion is that since we can't come up with budgetary figures, we wonder what we could write, if it is a support letter, to be more effective. a few points:

List of demands and no concessions so far.

Protecting TA workloads: many ideas floating around center on consolidating courses. Now all become one section, danger is that section retains the number of TAs with number of students.

Tying graduate tuition to undergraduate tuition

protecting class size

limit of number of students to have per class, concern that may eliminate smaller, specific classes, and breadth will suffer

support for GIDP coordinating model, try to have equal coordination units across campus. Idea was that these things enable University to obtain world class status. then it becomes a slogan and not a real goal.

Q: Jed Laver: What have you guys been thinking, looking for ideas?

A: We feel that this list is conservative, making a list of things we want to stay. We need a list of ways to change, make it improve outside of things to save.

Point of information: Bridget Barker: something to bring up is the idea of time to degree, a way to save university money in long run if people graduated in timely fashion, better support for graduate student may help with advancement to degree.

Point of information: Robert Jacobi: We basically came up with demands, but that is hard to package into white paper maybe think of an alternative, like a letter to Provost, things we want to keep instead of an official white paper.

Q: Erica Cirillo-McCarthy: As soon as those guidelines came out, we gave up any idea of writing a white paper . I don't know how to do concession , don't know what else there is to give up. How do you improve quality without spending more money?

A: Robert Jacobi: A white paper budget does not need numbers, it is enough if you say "save 2-3 people".

Q: Emily Connally: What about adding something about increasing competency guidelines for teaching, for grading, on teacher's behalf and students', a way to streamline where money goes, and make sure it goes based on workload?

A: Tim Chambers: This could be something in departmental guidelines, use competency in funding guidelines?

Q: Boris Glebov: Would you suggest qualifying exams, we should test competency in areas of speciality?

Jed Laver: I agree with most of what Emily is saying, in our department, as far as time to completion, we have a contract, where you have 3 years, or 1.5, whatever your stated goal was. After the contract is over, you stay as long as you want, they just wont fund you, but you know that coming in, already in place in our college.

Q: Boris Glebov: By wont fund, do you mean they wont give you TA?

A: Jed Laver: If it opened up and no one else, they would give it to you.

A: Robert Jacobi: The problem with TA and GA in our college, it is organized on department level, I think we would have a hard time bringing it to the university level. I think what Emily and Erica say is a great idea for dysfunctional program. This should be part of the proposals, but maybe we can pronounce that this is a part to save money and improve quality but we are not sure how.

Q: Emily Connally: Boris, would you like to email what you have and ask us?

A: Robert Jacobi: We must decide by next week to submit in time.

Bridget Barker suggested we should be active on the listserve to continue this discussion.

## VI. Representative and Director Reports –

- a. Erica Cirillo-McCarthy - We had a constituency meeting on Monday: we came up with a demand letter, including English Department and also college of humanities level complaints about class size, tuition remission, things we have we want to protect. Parents weekend is this upcoming weekend. We are going to hand out fliers to parents to let them know about increase in class size, transformation plans, etc. We have created a flier to hand

out to parents. If anyone wants to come, those of you who teach those massive classes, I will forward information to the listserve. We are looking for volunteers for Friday afternoon and Saturday.

- b. Robert Jacobi: I met with the real dean of my college. We have a meeting next Thursday with Dean and will see what comes out of that. Look at the homepage for white paper guidelines. Open forums must be held. If your dean is not cooperative, cite that. Just wanted to call it to your attention...
- c. David Lopez-Negrete: We had a constituency meeting at the Law School. We had been communicating with the dean. Following up, asking for more specifics, our dean still needs to attend more meetings before she knows what law school is asking for. We are also meeting with council of president's clubs tomorrow, bringing it up again, update on what transformation plan is. We are basically continuing to collect concerns on the process.

## VII. New Business

- a. **Webmaster Approval**- Emily Connally - prior to officer reports.
- b. **Treasurer Approval** - Stephen Bieda - Sanket Unhale was approved as interim treasurer.
- c. **Discussion of Dean Comrie's visit - Bridget Barker:** I meet with Dean Comrie on a regular basis, if you have further questions. Our next meeting is Wednesday morning. Before the next meeting, pass any questions on to me and I will ask them.
- d. **Discussion of White Paper Guidelines, status of GPSC/ASUA White papers**

Q: Jed Laver: On the budget page, it seemed like they were looking for position titles, is that true? Are they looking for numbers too?

A: Boris Glebov: They are looking for positions to be eliminated or merged, this is an administrative issue. The simple, financial impact may be difficult to assess in terms of how this will affect enrollment or contribution from alumni or grants coming in. No budget people are going over proposals, so they can be pretty vague.

Point of information: Stephen Bieda: We have had no further contact with ASUA on white papers, other priorities concerning tuition right now.

Q: James Johnson: Have they decided to cap graduate tuition?

A: The executive board will be talking to the ABOR president this Friday, but no cap is mentioned so far.

Stephen Bieda moved that this be the last emergency meeting. Jed Laver seconded the motion and it passed with no abstentions.

Stephen Bieda moved that item E, Club and POD funding be moved until the next general meeting. Erica Cirillo-McCarthy seconded the motion and it passed with no abstentions.

**VIII. Motion to Adjourn** – at 7:56 pm Stephen Bieda moved to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Boris Glebov and carried unanimously.