GSA Council Meeting  
Tuesday, August 12, 2014, 6:00 pm  
Captain Lounge, RMC

Minutes

In attendance: Samantha Collum (Biochemistry & Cell Biology), Caitlin Guenther (Bioengineering), Joelle Baddour (Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering), Andrea Miranda (Chemistry), David Ponton (History), Miriam Kuzbary (Mathematics), Jacob M. Wahlen-Strothman (Physics and Astronomy), Debshila Mallick (Psychology), Renee Ford (Religious Studies), William Rothwell (Sociology)


Guests: Michael Milles (English), Joe Carson (English), David Ramirez (Grad Housing), Paul Chaguine (Mechanical Engineering), Anjli Kumar (Chemistry), Michael McClain (Chemistry), Ellen Whitehead (Sociology), Mayank Kumar (ISAR), Shaghayegh Agah (RIS), Kate Ebad (Student Activities)

1. New Business  
1.1. August GSA Grants. Lynn provided a brief explanation of how grants are looked at by the committee and approved by the GSA Council.

1.1.1. The Council voted to award the Rice Iranian Society $250 for their newcomers welcome and RIS election meeting.

1.1.2. No representative from the Rice Chinese Students and Scholars Association was present at the Council meeting, so the Council could not vote to approve the grant for the Rice Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival Gala.

1.1.3. The Council voted to award the English Department $500 for the English Department Graduate Symposium.

1.1.4. The Council voted to award Indian Students at Rice $250 for the Indian Independence Day Celebration.

1.1.5. The Council voted to award Indian Students at Rice $250 for Swaagat (Fresher's Welcome).

1.2. Committee Elections

1.2.1. Athletics Committee (1). Elected: Chris Dohna (Philosophy).

1.2.2. Graduate Council (1). Elected: Paul Chaguine (Mechanical Engineering).
1.2.3. Student Activities & Presidents Programming Fund Allocation (1). Elected: Paul Chaguine (Mechanical Engineering).

1.2.4. Teaching Committee (1). Elected: Anjli Kumar (Chemistry).

1.2.5. Center for Career Development Committee (1). Elected: Mayank Kumar (ECE).

1.2.6. Commencement Speaker Committee (2). No one elected.

1.2.7. Environmental Health Committee (1). Elected: Andrea Miranda (Chemistry).

1.2.8. Health Insurance Committee (1). No one elected.

1.2.9. IT Advisory Committee (1). Elected: S. Kameshwar (Civil Engineering).

1.2.10. Diversity and Inclusion Committee (1). Elected: Ellen Whitehead (Sociology).

1.2.11. Laboratory Safety Committee (1). Elected: Michael McClain (Chemistry).

1.2.12. Center for Teaching Excellent Graduate Liaison (1). Elected: Miriam Kuzbarry (Mathematics).

1.2.13. Wellbeing Center Graduate Representatives (3). Elected: Samantha Collum (Biochemistry & Cell Biology), Ellen Whitehead (Sociology), and Renee Ford (Religious Studies).

1.2.14. University Council (1). Elected: David Ponton (History).

1.2.15. University Court (1). Elected: William Rothwell (Sociology).

1.2.16. Honor Council (8). Elected: Mayank Kumar (ECE).

1.2.17. GLBT Campus Climate Committee (2). Elected: William Rothwell (Sociology) and Ellen Whitehead (Sociology).

1.2.18. Elections for GSA committees including the GSA Grants Committee, GSA Social Committee, and GSA Community Service Committee will be held in the next Council meeting.

1.3. GSA Travel Fund Update. The GSA Travel Fund will be drawn from rollover funds from last year’s GSA budget. The awards ($500 per student on a reimbursement basis) will be given to grad students who need funding for conferences. The application process will work similar to grants - the applicant will fill out a form and the GSA officers will confirm that the application meets all the qualifications for the
award. To be qualified for the award, the applicant must (1) be registered as an active grad student at Rice, (2) have proof of acceptance to conference in which they will be presenting their work in some form, and (3) was not able to secure funding from their department or any other sources. Since this will be the first year the GSA travel fund is made available, there will be a significant focus on collecting data and maintaining a consistent and accurate record of who is applying (what are the departments / years of the graduate students) and when are students applying. Once this data is obtained, the award application process will be adjusted to better meet needs of grad students. The travel fund is planned to be launched by end of this semester around November, and about ten awards will be given per review cycle (about every 2 months) on a first come, first serve basis.

2. Past Events
   2.1. GSA Summer Picnic. The GSA Summer Picnic took place on Friday, August 8. The event was a success. About 800 tacos were ordered for the event, and the students who came early had plenty of food, though the food ran out halfway into the picnic. There were some complaints about not having the traditional BBQ, which will be featured in future picnic events.

3. Upcoming Events
   3.1. GSA Orientation. GSA Orientation will take place on Wednesday, August 20th. Plenty of volunteers have signed up for the breakout sessions, and all the events planning is on track. Any clubs/activities/organizations looking for graduate student participation are encouraged to get involved in the GSA activities fair.

   3.2. Discover Research Fair. The Discover Research Fair will take place from 4:30 - 6pm on Wednesday, August 27. During this event, graduate student volunteers will mingle and talk with interested undergraduates about their research in the GSA/SA Research Mixer. Grad students only need to bring a poster of their work to the event; board space will be provided in the RMC Grand Hall. The volunteer sign-up link for this event is below: https://netid.rice.edu/cas/login?service=http://gsaforms.rice.edu/view.php?id=34. The poster for this event can be found on the GSA Facebook page.

   3.3 Moving services for new students. Transportation services in the form of a U-Hall truck will be provided to new students who are moving in and need to transport furniture from the RGA Loan Closet to their apartments. Up to $200 of the moving fees will be funded by OISS. Forming a Housing Council would be useful to help with these type of events and encourage more transparency between grad students and Rice graduate housing.