GSA Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 17, 2013, 6:00 pm
Captain Lounge, RMC

Representatives: Renee Reder (Architecture); Hannah Fullgraf (Art History); Mauro Rinaldi (Biochemistry & Cell Biology); Alex Tatar (Bioengineering); Lauren Popp (Chem. & Biomolec. Engineering); Andrea Schlather (Chemistry); Yu Jun Leong (Civil and Environmental Engineering); Chris Schlather (Computational and Applied Math); Michael Farner (Earth Sciences); Rodrigo Paula (English); Suraya Khan (History); Vlad Soare (Linguistics); John King (Master of Liberal Studies); Miriam Kuzbary (Mathematics); Travis Boyer (Mechanical Engineering and Material Science); Chris Dohna (Philosophy); Jacob.M.Wahlen-Strothman (Physics and Astronomy); Ornsiree Junchaya (Professional Science); Debshila Mallick (Psychology); Lynn Fahey (Sociology); Sarah Tooth (Statistics)

Officers: Navid Sakhavand, Anne Hellebust, Melissa Venator, Kiri Kilpatrick, Michelle Downey, Michelle Sneck, Cheryl Thompson, Barbara Redeker, Scott McGill

Guests: Erin Edgington (MLS); Joshua Eyler (CTE); Debra Kolah (Fondren); Daniel Fu (Emergency Preparedness); Kathleen Gould and Agnes Ho (Wellbeing)

1. New Business
   1.1. **Guest: Joshua Eyler, Director, Center for Teaching Excellence.**
       1.1.1. Joshua is the new director of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), which was started last year by a faculty initiative.
       1.1.2. A major part of the mission of CTE is to support graduate students who are currently in the classroom or who want to teach. CTE activities will help students: how to talk about effective teaching during job applications, how to put together a teaching philosophy and teaching portfolio, and how to present teaching experience in an interview setting.
       1.1.3. CTE offers individualized services like teaching observations and consultations, syllabus design, and student performance assessment.
       1.1.4. CTE offers group services primarily through their workshop series, which addresses topics essential for effective teaching techniques. If you take enough workshops, you are eligible for a Teaching Certificate.
       1.1.5. Visit CTE's website to learn about upcoming workshops: http://cte.rice.edu

   1.2. **Guest: Debra Kolah, Director of User Experience, Fondren Library.**
       1.2.1. After many years as a science librarian, she now focuses on user experience. Fondren is pursuing many initiatives to improve the user experience, including usability studies of the website and other tools and focus groups on study room renovations.
       1.2.2. There are some major renovations planned for next year. The Digital Media Commons will move from Herring Hall to Fondren in Fall 2014. The Center
for Teaching Excellence has already moved into the second floor of the Herring Hall space and will expand when the DMC move is complete. The Geographical Information Systems currently located in the basement of Fondren will move to join the new DMC space. Renovations will not negatively affect the amount of space currently allocated to graduate students.

1.2.3. In October, Fondren will launch a new Library Ambassador Committee of eight students (graduate and undergraduate) that will meet monthly to provide constructive input on Fondren services, operations, and renovations. This is part of a larger initiative to integrate student feedback into Fondren planning.

1.3. **Guest: Daniel Fu, Director of Planning and Projects and the Vice President for Administration (Hurricane Preparedness).**

1.3.1. University-level emergency preparedness. The website “emergency.rice.edu” is the best place to find up-to-date information about emerging crises. The office also sends text messages about emerging crises to all students. Note that the University has no control over the delivery times for the text messages, which depends on cell carriers. Be sure to note that RUPD’s number is x6000, and that the blue emergency phones on campus patch directly to the police.

1.3.2. Hurricane shelter policy. In the event of a hurricane, the University will shelter only graduate students who have a housing contract with the University. For those students, the University will assess and manage any evacuations should the need occur. Students who live off-campus are on their own, as are faculty and staff.

1.3.3. It is in each student’s best interest to prepare his or her own emergency kit with enough supplies to last several days.

1.4. **Guests: Kathleen Gould and Agnes Ho, Wellbeing Center.**

1.4.1. The Student Wellbeing Office combines the functions of the Wellness Center and the Student Retention Office. This year they will be able to provide more one-on-one support and wellbeing education throughout the campus.

1.4.2. Licensed counselors and social workers staff the Wellbeing Office and provide ‘counseling lite’. They can’t provide mental health treatment, but they can offer advice and guidance on a host of common graduate student problems. In contrast, the Counseling Center provides long-term clinical counseling.

1.4.3. Moving forward, direct all concerns to the Wellbeing Center and they can refer you to the Counseling Center if necessary or other on-campus services.

1.4.4. The Wellbeing Center is also available to speak to small groups about specific problems by special request.

1.4.5. You do not need Rice insurance to use the services. It is a free service for all Rice undergraduate and graduate students.
2. **Constitution Amendment**
   2.1. **New Club - Rice University National Professional Science Master’s Association.** Amendments included minor changes to the mission statement and purpose. Approved.

3. **Past Events**
   3.1. **O-week - Wed., Aug. 21.**
   3.3. **Rice/A&M Football game - $10.00 tickets. Tickets sold out both days. The second day the tickets went on sale earlier than was announced so the tickets sold out before they were even supposed to go on sale. For future reference, we should request more tickets and try to reserve some for graduate students.**

4. **Upcoming Events**
   4.1. **GSA/RCSSC Fall Picnic - September 20. Volunteer!**
   4.2. **GSA Wellbeing Coffee Break - Wed., Sept. 25 3-4:30 pm, Captain Lounge**
   4.3. **GSA/SA Research Mixer - Monday, October 7th, Sign up to participate! This is a great opportunity to share your research with undergraduates.**
   4.4. **Graduate International Leadership Summit – Friday, September 13. Save the date of February 28 for the Graduate International Cultural Night.**
   4.5. **Oktoberfest with Grad Alum - Friday, October 11, Valhalla. A collaboration with the Alumni Committee.**
   4.6. **Elevator Pitch Logo Contest - submissions due by October 7th.**
   4.7. **Elevator Pitch graduate student Coordinators - need 2, contact JD (jdornell@rice.edu)**

5. **Feedback**
   5.1. **Texas Medical Center Committee Report.** The committee is planning TMC graduate student mixers that, moving forward, will include Rice students.
   5.2. **BRC golf carts are not available to students whose labs are not located in the BRC. BRC lab students report that golf carts are in high demand.**
   5.3. **Lounge Update.** We have been waiting for the University to provide us with options for purchasing commercial furniture. The committee is meeting soon to reinvigorate our efforts to finish the renovations.