Council Minutes for November 17th, 2015 - 6:00pm

Meeting Opened: 6:01pm

In attendance:

- Officers: Lynn Fahey, Alessandra Forcucci, Catherine Majors, Nick Trenton, Peshal Nayak, Emily Thomas
- Directors: Jesse Choe, Eric Lewis, Eslam El-Shahat, Mehbuba Tanzid, Sarah Kim, Andrea Miranda, Josh Hill
- Program Representatives: Nathanael Vlachos (Anthropology), Josh Hill (Applied Physics), Evio Isaac (Architecture), Rachel Harmeyer (Art History), Ruda Cui (Biochemistry and Cell Biology), Sam Paulsen (Bioengineering), Blake Sutherland (Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering), Alicia Mangubat (Chemistry), Temitayo Ajayi (Computational and Applied Mathematics), Lexi Malouta (Earth Sciences), Shannon Carter (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology), Shasha Liu (Economics), George Chen (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Christina Regelski (History), Miriam Kuzbary (Mathematics), John Alred (Material Science and Nanotechnology), Eleazar Marquez (Mechanical Engineering), Jacob M. Wahlen-Strothman (Physics and Astronomy), Santiago Sosa (Political Science), Vaishnavi Ramesh (Professional Masters in Engineering), Bradley Johnson (Religious Studies), Lauren Rodriguez (Sociology), Jonathan Stewart (Statistics), Kareem Mehrabiani (Systems, Synthetic, and Physical Biology)
- Cultural Representatives: Souptik Barua (Indian Students at Rice)

- Welcome New Reps
  - Lauren Rodriguez from Sociology

- Club Approval by the GSA Council
  - Saudi Student Association
    - Votes
      - 21 in favor
      - 0 against/abstained
    - Approved

- Campus Carry Discussion
  - At the time of the meeting, 479 graduate students had voted
    - 83% oppose campus carry
    - 14% are in favor of campus carry
    - 3% uncertain
  - Small group discussions were formed during the GSA Council Meeting. Their opinions are reported below.
    - Group 1
      - From the departments they represented, they found that only about 1 in 20 graduate students were in favor of campus carry
      - Their polling is consistent with what the GSA found through their online poll
    - Group 2
In this group, no had heard of anyone who was in favor of campus carry
As Rice is a wet campus, they had concerns about having alcohol near guns

Group 3
Overall, this group found that everyone is very against campus carry due to safety concerns, especially with young people and alcohol.
This group said that if safety on campus is the concern, there are alternative measures to take rather than allowing concealed weapons on campus

Group 4
This group reported that everyone they have talked to has been opposed to campus carry
This group does not trust undergraduate/graduate students with guns

Group 5
This group found most people oppose campus carry due to increased perceived risk and not a lot of perceived benefit
This group agrees that if safety is the concern, they would rather have increased police presence (not necessarily even number, just visibility)

Group 6
They were generally opposed due to campus carry
They thought that firearms could make a lot of situations (especially around alcohol) much worse
They noted that the USA has an unusually relaxed policy about guns compared to other countries globally, so increasing leniency may make international student feel more alienated

Group 7
This group says that a lot of undergraduate live on campus in dense housing, so they party and drink together.
  - Guns could be potentially problematic in dorms
    - There is no guarantee of proper storage
    - Many undergrads don’t lock doors
    - Roommates/friends/college mates could steal guns
  - Because of dorm parties, ten to a hundred undergraduate students could be in someone’s room with their gun, so accidents could happen

General comments from the discussion
There is not a lot of literature on gun control
• There is a moratorium on government funding, so it’s hard to find studies on what is the most effective way to reduce gun violence on campus
  ■ Guns also represent a high danger to the handler him- or herself
    • Access to a deadly weapon increases suicide risk
  ■ In the dorms, you’re not allowed to have candles or water beds for fear of potential problems if someone does not use it safely
    • Guns are more dangerous than a candle
  ■ Possible compromise(?): a subset of the concealed weapons permit holders could carry guns with certain restrictions
    • The person must have been a law enforcement officer/soldier
    • The person cannot store gun in the dorms
    • The person must have additional training at RUPD
    • How would we decide these additional requirements?
    • Current policy allows for guns on campus if gotten a personal vetting by the RUPD
  ■ Currently, Rice has emergency situation training for active-shooter provided by the RUPD
    • Concealed Gun Weapons training includes nothing on responding in an emergency situation
  ■ If guns on campus are making people nervous, do we also want to have a discussion with RUPD? What parallel can be drawn between our current discussion and police officers having guns on campus?
    • RUPD is different since they are well-trained and clearly marked (in uniform)
    • RUPD has a very organized structure with their training. Their accuracy and performance are measured every month. They have first response to active shooter training. This is their careers.
    • RUPD is trained to do everything they can to not pull their guns (only as a last resort).
    • RUPD is better trained than an average concealed weapons permit holder
  ■ If everyone had a gun on campus, suddenly there would be a concern that any argument could escalate to injury or death
    • The idea behind campus carry is to make criminals feel this way
  ○ Conclusion that we will pass on to the Rice administration
    ■ Students are opposed to Senate Bill 11 as written.
  • Critical Thinking in Sexuality Course for Undergraduate
    ○ SA passed a legislation that they want a mandatory class about consent, healthy relationships, etc.
    ○ Proposed instructors of their course could be graduate students
    ○ As graduate students do not take as many classes, a different strategy would need to be used to educate graduate students about these thing
Email thoughts about both the undergraduate Critical Thinking in Sexuality Course and possibly graduate education to Lynn (lmf4@rice.edu) or to gsa@rice.edu

Graduate-Alumni Interactions
- There is a need to optimize this for both career exploration and attaining careers post-graduation
- Josh Hill, the Professional Development Director, will send an email seeking more information on how to address this

Open Forum
- The requirement to show Rice ID at GSA events can be onerous
  - A strict requirement for a Rice ID was originally implemented to make sure undergraduates didn’t steal food from graduate events
  - To be clear, family and guests are included at every GSA event (even if they’re undergrads)
  - To make this more transparent, a note could be included in the GSA announcements about the reasoning for requiring Rice ID for events
  - Requiring owl sticker is another issue that we are working on
- There is desire to enhance interaction between the undergraduate SA and the GSA
  - For the the Graduate International Cultural Night, the GSA is looking at working with the undergraduate SA so that there are more connections

Future events
- International Education Week Coffee Break with OISS - Wednesday Nov 18th
  - Lot of international food
  - Contest to win gift cards to coffeehouse and restaurants
    3pm-5pm in the Captain’s Lounge)
- Graduate International Cultural Night (GICN) Planning
  - If you want to participate and showcase your culture, contact Mihika, the GSA OISS liaison, at mehbuba.tanzid@rice.edu or contact GSA at gsa@rice.edu
- Beer Bike Planning
  - If you like to get involved or if you have any ideas for a theme, contact Eric, a GSA social director, at eml5@rice.edu or contact GSA at gsa@rice.edu

Past Events
- Valhallaween
  - It was a great, successful event with lots of awesome costumes
- PAGES (Presidential Assembly of Graduate Executives Social)
  - Brought together the leaders of a variety of clubs and organizations on campus to make connections
  - It was a great networking event, but it might be more useful earlier in the year so that more events can occur due to that networking
- Fall Picnic
Co-sponsored by the Indian Students at Rice, who planned the event
- It was used to celebrate Diwali/Deepotsav and showcase Indian culture
- It was a very successful event
  - Seven Days of Service
    - The Bioengineering department donated and volunteered a lot
    - BRC donated as much as main campus
    - The Toys for Tots donation bin will stay in the GSA Captain’s Lounge into December to allow for more donations for Christmas

Meeting closed: 7:04pm