GSA General Council Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2002

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm.

I. Approval of Agenda

Agenda for the meeting was approved. Alan Levy moved, and Kathy seconded. Adopted by unanimous consent.

II. Special Topic: The Legal and Political Environment in the United States for International Students and Scholars

The Honorable Congresswoman Lois Capps was introduced at 6:07 pm and proceeded to speak about the impact of the events of September 11, 2001, on international graduate students. Ms. Capps emphasized the important contributions that international students and scholars make to the UCSB campus and community, and that the moratorium on student visas has ended. Before taking questions, Ms. Capps also spoke about the recently passed education bill, which she supported, along with efforts to enact legislation dealing with the nursing shortage. The floor was then opened for questions.

Dr. Mary Jacob, Director of the UCSB Office of International Students and Scholars, praised Ms. Capps for her efforts to expedite issues with the INS.

The issue of immigration curbs, such as those proposed by Senator Diane Feinstein, was discussed, as was the recently-passed anti-terrorism bill, the latter which Ms. Capps voted for.

Several graduate students shared their experiences with customs and the INS in the post-September 11 environment. One student noted that he had been turned away from the United States because he possessed Islamic textbooks. Another student claimed he was told to leave the country until the situation had "settled." Several students mentioned being racially profiled or having difficulty entering the United States from Canada and Mexico.

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from December 5, 2001, meeting were approved. Kelly Pollock moved, and Kathy Meyer seconded. Adopted by unanimous consent.

IV. Graduate Division

Dr. Mary McMahon, Assistant Dean of the UCSB Graduate Division, noted that Graduate Student Appreciation Week would begin on Monday, February 4. She requested that students help out in any way that they could, including speaking with visiting students. She also noted that applications for continuing fellowships were being accepted during Winter Quarter. In addition, Dr. McMahon mentioned that there might be new single graduate student rooms available in the new Manzanita development, and she encouraged students to visit the Housing and Residential Services homepage at http://www.housing.ucsb.edu/ for more information.

Alex Cook, Graduate Funding Peer Advisor of Graduate Division, explained that her role was to help graduate students find extramural funding. Some of her activities include assisting students in utilizing UCSB-only funding websites and running workshops to help students locate sources of funding. She noted that the Social Science listserv gives up to seven awards weekly in the humanities and the social sciences. Kathy Meyer added that it was a good time to visit Alex because funding often needs to be secured in the fall of the year before it is needed. Alex can be contacted at fundingpeer@graddiv.ucsb.edu.

V. Vox Populi

Sarah Battersby spoke about furniture ergonomics pursuant to concerns raised during the December meeting of the GSA General Council. She requested that students speak with their departmental chairs to get a sense of where the departments stand on this issue.

Sarah also requested an informal vote on the preference between a proposed beer-tasting event versus a wine-tasting event. The beer-tasting event was preferred by a majority of responding students present.

Edward Collins noted that a replacement member of IVPAC was still needed. Mark Schuller from Anthropology said that he might be able to procure a volunteer.

VI. Information Items

A. Committee Reports

Alan Levy of the Campus Elections Committee said that there was no quorum at the most recent meeting of the CEC. He reported that the CEC would go through the GSA to secure lock-in fees instead of through a campuswide vote. Alan noted that the CEC will use guidelines similar to those employed for the 2001 elections, even though this is viewed unfavorably by the GSA.

Shawn Landres briefly noted that he had been in contact with other committees to explain the rationale behind the resolution adopted in the December meeting of the GSA General Council. He said that the response has been positive, especially from the Women's Center.

B. Officer Reports

No additional statements were made beyond the submitted reports.

VII. Action Items

A. Committee Appointments/Nominations

Shawn noted that Angela Whipple is the newest member of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women, correcting an error which had appeared on the GSA website.

B. Budget

No issues were raised.

VIII. Discussion Items

A. GSHIP Revisions for 2002-2003

Alan Levy, member of the Graduate Student Health Insurance Plan Committee, noted that discussions on upcoming revisions are still incomplete, and that he is seeking feedback on what students want covered for 2002-2003. He explained that the main options under consideration were: 1) Simplification of prescription benefits, 2) Continued enhancement of the dental program for non-routine work, and 3) Coverage for eyeglasses and eye checkups.

Mark Schuller and Soomin Chun both queried about international GSHIP coverage. Alan said that coverage exists, but access to it is a problem.

Other issues raised during the discussion included whether there was a cap on co-payments, what kinds of orthotics are covered, availability of medical history summaries, and the suggestion of GSHIP survey forms.

Alan explained that any complaints about particular GSHIP issues should be routed through John Corbett.

B. Upcoming GSA Lock-In Fee Votes

Shawn observed that there would be several lock-in fee requests on the 2002 ballot, including those for the Women's Center, the Disabled Students Program, and the Multicultural Center. He explained that this was due in part to inevitable budget cuts coming soon, and that fees to offset such cuts invariably fall on the students.

Dee Acker, Director of the Women's Center, spoke in support of the proposed lock-in fee for the Women's Center. She outlined many programs that have helped graduate students, including sexual harassment and rape prevention programs, plus activities for non-traditional students and an art center. The lock-in fee could provide for new programs, including child care grants, symposium opportunities, and dissertation support. The proposed lock-in fee increase is $1.75 per student per quarter.

Stacey Shears, Director of the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, raised the possibility that lock-in fee monies could be used to provide more information on same-sex partnerships and issues surrounding coming out.

Karl Bryant from Sociology pointed out that the Women's Center has programs that benefit men as well as women. Several other students also spoke in support of the Women's Center's lock-in fee.

Soomin noted that 100% of the lock-in fees are covered for TAs.

C. GSA Constitution Revision

Shawn noted that the new GSA constitution will be voted on in the March elections, but it was not yet clear how exactly it would be proposed. To appear on the ballot, it would have to be written in some votable form by March.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Corbett
GSA Press Secretary