

Arts & Sciences Graduate Student “Caucus”

Official Minutes

Date/Time: Monday, October 26, 2009 12:00pm-1:00pm

Location: 340 Gardiner Hall

Representatives Present: Eli Levine (Biology), Ricky Woofter (Chemistry), Ryan Trauman (English) Jamie Ratliff (Fine Arts), Brooke Cochran-Webber (French), Mith Barnes (Humanities), Lynda Mercer (Humanities), Jennifer Cruze (Justice Administration), Jeremy Hornbeck (Physics), Carolyn Morgan (Political Science), Jason Smith (Political Science). Sarah Williams (Psychological & Brain Sciences), Chip Thomas (Sociology), Shireen Deobhakta (Urban and Public Affairs), Beth Irvin (Urban & Public Affairs)

Representatives Absent: Rebecca Wells (Communication), Kelly Watt (Fine Arts), Stephanie Honchell (History), Kim Meyer (Mathematics), Jennifer Oladipo (Pan African Studies), Carissa Shafto (Psychological & Brain Sciences), Patrick Ridge (Spanish), Will Salmons (Theatre Arts), Jacqueline Thompson (Theatre Arts), Alex Molina (Urban Planning)

UL Faculty and Staff Present: Dean J. Blaine Hudson, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Wendy Pfeffer, Assistant Dean of Graduate Affairs, Rick Vanlittersum, Program Assistant Sr., Graduate Affairs/Advising

I. Welcome: Dr. Wendy Pfeffer

Pfeffer called the meeting to order at 12:03pm. She introduced herself and thanked the representatives for attending this initial meeting. Pfeffer explained the current changes in the structure of graduate education at the University of Louisville. In years prior, graduate students in A&S departments were students of the Graduate School. Now they are classified as students of A&S seeking graduate degrees. Many of these changes offer A&S more responsibilities and opportunities for expansion. It seems appropriate as these changes occur that A&S have a representative body that can speak to the Dean, administration, and faculty on the behalf of graduate students. Both Pfeffer and Dean Hudson asked A&S departments to nominate a representative(s) to attend this first opportunity from students from all disciplines to meet as a group.

II. Welcome: Dean J. Blaine Hudson

Hudson introduced himself and again thanked the representatives. He described the attendees as “pioneers,” as there has been a fundamental shift the organization of graduate education at the University of Louisville. Due to this shift, Hudson has interest in establishing some internal mechanisms that would allow students from the multiple graduate programs to interact with one another, give feedback to the administration on

issues and problems related to graduate education, and allow the experience of graduate study to be as rewarding as possible. An A&S graduate council would likely be a much different representative body than in other academic units largely due to the intellectual diversity of the graduate programs in the college. With many different programs and course offerings, the graduate student experience may not be a “one-size-fits-all” proposition, as it may be mixed with both “generic” and department-specific influences. Hudson hopes that the group can learn more about these influences and encouraged representatives to contact him if they had any additional questions, concerns, or feedback (jbhuds01@louisville.edu).

III. Introduction: GSC President Amber Carrier

Pfeffer asked Carrier to come and speak as she is very supportive of this new body. However, she was unable to attend the meeting, and the group moved to other business.

IV: Discussion of Purpose and Goals for Group

a. Introduction: Pfeffer opened the dialogue by stating the purpose and goals for the group were up to the representatives to determine. She and Dean Hudson hoped that this group would serve as a representative body that would speak for graduate students in A&S and aid in identifying and resolving issues related to graduate education. She relayed that Carrier strongly advised organizing the group as a university Recognized Student Organization (RSO). The main advantage of RSO status is potential access to more resources and funds that may not be available solely through A&S. Pfeffer opened the floor to discussion of areas that could be improved in graduate education.

b. Travel/Data Set Funding: Thomas expressed his difficulties in obtaining funds to travel to conferences and to purchase data sets. There are many different processes in obtain travel funds through departmental and/or undergraduate groups, but each method was convoluted in its own way. He believed it would be helpful if A&S (and the group) could simplify and streamline the process of obtaining funds.

c. Institutional Review Boards (IRB): Trauman brought up his frustrations with the IRB system in regard to observational research. For example, he completed 50-70 pages of paperwork for a research project, only to find out the IRB reviewed one document and seemingly did not read any more than that. He found the IRB process to be terribly inefficient for social science research. Morgan concurred with Trauman as she found there to be little help for those doing social science research; it seemed the IRB was more equipped for those working on biomedical research. Pfeffer added that changing the forms for IRB was unlikely (based on her personal experience), but suggested that an ombudsperson or a representative may be helpful in “ironing out” difficulties.

d. Safety: Thomas voiced concerns with campus safety as a potential issue for the council due to increase in criminal-related incidents on and around Belknap campus during the last few months. Irvin concurred as Urban & Public Affairs continues to have issue with crime due to its isolated location from the rest of campus and with many of its graduate courses occurring in the evening. Hornbeck added that graduate students may be more susceptible to these issues, as they tend to be on campus later

in the evening due to course schedules and completing research. Cruze explained that the Graduate Assistants in Justice Administration move their cars to a central location after 5pm and move together as a group after dark. Mercer contributed that an A&S council may be more able to address safety issues on Belknap campus, as any work on safety by the GSC (at-large) might be divided between all U of L campus sites.

e. Representation on A&S Committees & Voting Councils: Thomas suggested that the group could try to seek methods of influence on A&S administration and committees. For instance, a member (likely the president or chair) might serve as a representative to a current decision making body within A&S. While Pfeffer and Dean Hudson had not yet considered this possibility, it was an issue she would support in future discussions. She envisioned a scenario where the group's president would be a voting member in regular A&S College Assembly meetings, similar to the Undergraduate Council's voting member. Currently, there are undergraduate or graduate student members on some A&S committees, (i.e. curriculum, grievance) that in the future may be nominated by the representative body.

f. Other issues/recommendations: Ratliff proposed meeting with library staff and working with them to resolve issues related to graduate students working on dissertations, such as the interlibrary loan program. Woofter recommended the group work on academic events or symposia to interconnect the graduate departments of A&S in a similar fashion to the recent Darwin 2009 event sponsored by several departments on campus. Deobhakta shared concerns with retention issues in PhD programs (especially in Urban & Public Affairs). Thomas suggested making efforts to increase awareness of A&S Master's programs to other institutions which offer PhD programs, employment recruiters, and other entities. Cruze and Hornbeck advanced the potential of organizing an A&S graduate career fair based on the model of recent events sponsored by Justice Administration and the Speed School.

V. Obtaining Recognized Student Organization Status

a. Advantages/Disadvantages for RSO Status: Pfeffer offered the representatives a brief list of benefits for becoming an RSO which included:

1. Access to independent space outside of A&S buildings
2. Access to funds for travel, data, etc.
3. Independent access to web site outside of the A&S web sphere
4. Ability to creative activities independently, rather than relying on A&S approval

Her one potential downside of RSO status was that officers were required, thus a leadership core would be necessary, rather than one or two leaders/spokespersons. Trauman shared that the English Graduate Organization went through the process of obtaining RSO status (completing forms, drafting a constitution, negotiating a final document), but realized afterward that they did not need those for the work the group wanted to accomplish. There are also attendance requirements at various meetings to maintain RSO status. While not opposed to seeking RSO status at this time, Trauman recommended spending more time determining what subjects and problems to work on as a group first and then working on organizational structure and RSO status as secondary goals. These issues were carefully considered.

b. Consent to Pursuit RSO Status: Pfeffer then offered a non-binding motion authorizing the A&S Graduate Student “Caucus” to seek RSO status. The motion was **approved** by unanimous consent of the representatives present.

c. RSO Guidelines & RSO Information Sheet: Representatives were instructed to review the student-affairs documents on forming a RSO. Documents were available at the meeting and are included with the minutes report for those absent.

d. Constitution Committee: Pfeffer called for volunteers to form a committee to draft a constitution (a requirement for RSO status). Morgan, Thomas, Barnes, and Hornbeck offered to serve on the committee and to create a rough draft before the group’s next meeting. The committee was encouraged to review the model constitution (attached to minutes) provided by student affairs, the current GSC constitution, and the current A&S Undergraduate Council constitution.

VI: Planning for Future Meetings

a. Name of Organization: For the purpose of avoiding confusion, Pfeffer recommended avoid the using the name “Graduate Student Council”. She suggested using the term caucus or a different identifier to help differentiate between A&S and the at-large representative bodies. It would also be possible for an A&S graduate student to serve as a representative on both groups concurrently. The official name of the group is to be discussed further at future meetings.

b. Meeting Times and Frequency: Pfeffer recommended that the group not set a strict structure as to future meetings. Ideally, the group would meet when there was business to accomplish, rather than getting together for the sole purpose of having a meeting. With email listservs and other forms of communication available, small matters could be discussed in those forums and not require a formalized meeting.

c. Tentative Meeting Date/Time: The next meeting of the A&S Graduate Student Caucus is scheduled for **Monday, November 16 at Noon in 340 Gardiner Hall.**

VII: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned shortly before 1 pm.