



## **Graduate Student Representative's Report to the Board of Trustees**

Executive Committee Meeting, September 12, 2013

Patrick Neary, President of the Graduate Student Organization

As we begin the fall semester, I am pleased to report progress on our initiatives and many successes over the course of the summer.

First, the GSO has hosted our most successful fall picnic to date. Thanks to the hard work of our External Vice President, Judith Ricks, and the convenience of a new Centro stop outside the Inn Complete, over 800 graduate students enjoyed food, beer, and a beautiful Friday afternoon. This was our best attended event in recent memory, and has significantly increased the GSO's visibility amongst the graduate student body, especially first year students.

The GSO has recently concluded a successful sale of subsidized Empire Park Passports, as well as a giveaway of free passes to a local golf course and other recreational activities. These passes are part of the GSO's expanded services and programming, aimed at improving graduate student life on campus in cost-effective ways that respond to specific requests we have fielded from the student population in recent years. Collectively, over 500 passes have been handed out in what has become one of the popular programs we have run.

This summer, the GSO also completed an initial retooling of our grant programs. We are anticipating receiving approximately 400 applications for our travel and research grant programs. These programs have a combined budget of \$100,000, allowing us to assist more graduate students than in any past year. Our programs are larger and more professionally run than almost any other student government-managed grant program in the nation. I must thank the previous Grant Committee volunteers and our Internal Vice President, Todd Metcalfe, for their assistance in developing and overseeing this growing program.

Looking forward, the GSO is currently undertaking a review of our budgeting processes to assess the need for an increase in the Graduate Student Activity Fee, necessitated by expanded programming and the need to provide benefits to students in highly diverse degree programs. This fee, currently \$40 per semester and assessed of all graduate students, has remained unchanged in eight years. Through the foresight of our Comptroller, Patrick Dawes, we are able to take time on this process. Our initial proposals do not increase the fee until fiscal year 2015.

Finally, the GSO will be moving forward with a series of recommendations to the Graduate School to improve the oversight and regulation of these contracts. I hope to further standardize the timing of contract offers, as well as encourage departments to make funding decisions, expectations, and limitations clearer to incoming and current students. I will look to improve the current system, allowing departments to retain the flexibility they need, while allowing students the opportunity to plan for their own future, both academically and financially.

These hoped-for changes are the first of a series of recommendations and changes I will be making and pursuing over the course of the year arising from the graduate assistant survey conducted in the spring 2013 semester.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to presenting further progress in future reports.