



Graduate Student Organization President's Report

Senate First Business Meeting, September 24, 2014

Patrick Neary, GSO President

Fast Forward Syracuse - Update

The Fast Forward process is moving forward rapidly. There are quite a few focus groups currently being formed to gather data and input. I will be looking for volunteers to serve, so please be responsive to emails requesting assistance. There is also a website for input: <http://fastforward.syr.edu/submit-an-idea/>. Please encourage your departments to submit ideas. The Fast Forward teams are eager to receive input, which will form an integral part of the decisions involved in the Fast Forward initiative. Graduate students need to be vocal in this stage of the process so we can advance our concerns.

In addition, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee has asked for a set of priorities from each group on campus, including the GSO. As such, I am calling for a discussion of our priorities as graduate students. This will take the form of requests of each of our committees at their first meetings to prepare a small set of priorities and goals for the university. The Board will compile these into one document for submission to the Strategic Planning group.

Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Services & Student Affairs – Update

The Rally for Consent, held September 17, was a resounding success. Approximately 200 students gathered around the Hendricks Chapel steps and about 75 marched to Crouse-Hinds, the administration building. 30 people went to the sixth floor and stood outside the Chancellor's office until he came out to accept the petition signatures and hear some of the comments written about the decision to close the Advocacy Center. The energy of the group was positive, and there was a focus on future change to improve services and transparency within the university. Based on the success of the rally, more rallies and marches are being planned by various groups across campus, including a rally held by the student chapter of the NAACP on Friday.

University administration noticeably changed their responses to students and their tone in general following the Rally for Consent. This includes particularly productive meetings with Rebecca Reed Kantowitz, VP and Dean of Student Affairs, and a productive first meeting of the Chancellor's Workgroup on Sexual Assault, whose meeting was finally scheduled in the wake of the rally. There appears to be some acknowledgement of the frustrations and concerns of students. I plan to use this as an opportunity to push our various priority items, including TA pay, library funding, and mental health services.

Mental Health Services

After conversations with various graduate students, I have serious concerns about the direction of mental health services at the university. In particular, there may be a move toward only offering emergency or crisis services to students. There are also serious concerns about the lack of services during the summer for graduate students who are not actively enrolled in courses. It is for this reason

the GSO encourages all graduate students not otherwise taking courses to enroll in GRD 998 in the summer, to ensure eligibility for various university services. While crisis services to still exist, and I encourage anyone in crisis to contact the Counseling Center at 315-443-4715, improvements are needed. Graduate students are at higher than normal risk due to the often intense, stressful nature of our degree programs. I will push for more comprehensive services, particularly aiming efforts at the budget office, as these decisions have traditionally been budget-motivated.

Student Affairs Advisory Group

The Student Affairs advisory group is currently being formed by Dean Kantrowitz, SA President Boris Gresely, and me. This group of 20 students will represent widely diverse student populations across campus and advise Dean Kantrowitz on potential changes to the Division of Student Affairs. I am looking for volunteers for this group, in particular international students, one-year masters students, and longer-term masters students. There will also be an opportunity for students to apply to be on the group. Please email gso@syr.edu if you or anyone you know would be interested in this group.

Tuition and Budget Group

A small group of students, including 2-3 graduate students, will meet regularly with the CFO, the Director of Budget and Planning, and others to discuss tuition increases and the university budget as it pertains to tuition level. I expect this group to be primarily of interest to non-TA/RA students, but there is no restriction placed on membership. I hope to offer regular reports out of this group to the Senate.