



President's Report to the Senate

Senate Meeting, November 9, 2016

Rajesh Kumar, GSO President

Governing Council

The former GSO leadership formed a Governing Council to bring student governments of Syracuse University (SU) and SUNY ESF together envisioning collaborative effort to achieve collective goals. The Council consists of SU GSO, SU Student Bar Association (SUSBA), SU Student Association (SUSA), SUNY ESF Graduate Student Association (SUNY ESF GSA), and SUNY ESF Undergraduate Student Association. Four areas of collaboration were discussed: the Welcome Shuttle Program, the NAGPS National Conference, the CCTV Camera Project for Off-campus Safety, and a number of possible social events. SUNY ESF GSA and SUSBA agreed to collaborate for Welcome Shuttle Program, NAGPS National Conference, and organizing possible events together. SUNY ESF GSA expressed interest in becoming a member of NAGPS as well. The GSO, being the legacy member of NAGPS, will facilitate the process. This will certainly open range of opportunities of collaboration related to NAGPS.

SUSA is working towards the implementation of an off-campus neighborhood camera project, and they have committed about \$15,000.00 for the first phase of the project. The Project Manager, Alex Lynch explained the complete project detailing the issues of off-campus safety, campus neighborhood crime statistics, impact of installing cameras, fundraising, contributors, and implementation of the project to several committees and boards including the University Senate Committee on Student Life, Student Affairs Advisory Board, and the GSO. The CCTV camera installation project and concrete planning towards it look promising to me and I believe that it will certainly enhance off-campus safety for most of the SU and SUNY ESF graduate student living in the neighborhood of Euclid Ave and Westcott Street. Therefore, I recommend that the GSO support this project ideologically and financially.

Moreover, I would like to thank Peta Long for coming to the governing council meeting, discussing the NAGPS National Conference proposal, and communicating with people responsible for outreach in SUNY ESF GSA and SUSBA in order to enhance the outreach efforts.

NAGPS National Conference

We would like to thank Senate for approving the submission of the bid for hosting the NAGPS National Conference at Syracuse University. We have reached out to several offices including the Chancellor, the Provost, the CFO, the Dean of Student Affairs, the Dean of Graduate School, and the College Deans seeking academic and financial support. Most of the responses that we have received so far are encouraging and positive. We are glad to share that offices of the Chancellor, Provost, and Graduate School have extended their unconditional support to the bid and has also committed a total of \$15,000.00 (\$5000.00 each).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Peter Venable, Dean of Graduate School for taking the very first step to support the bid and issuing a combined letter of support mentioning the contribution from the above mentioned offices. Special thanks to Peta Long for helping throughout, starting from the

planning and drafting of the request letters, strategizing the fundraising effort, and putting the proposal in place. On behalf of the GSO, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the University Administration for being extremely positive and supportive to the GSO bid to host the conference at Syracuse University.

Free Speech Policy Updates

With the tremendous effort of our previous leadership, three existing University policies governing speech and expression have been revised and are available for review and comments at http://supolicies.syr.edu/free_speech/. The revised policies include a new anti-harassment policy, a revised computing and electronic communications policy, and a revised posting policy. After receiving the public comments, the policies will again be reviewed and revised by the policy advisory committee. The policies will be presented to the university Senate and the Chancellor's Council on the policy process.

Graduate Student Employees Health Benefits

Enrollment for registering to benefits are open and benefits eligible students are eligible to enroll for university subsidized health insurance (POMCO). Therefore, it is evident that POMCO will be available for graduate student employee (both existing and incoming) as previous year. However, the Graduate Employee Benefits Working Group continues to explore alternative options for subsidizing the health insurance for graduate students employees. A new guidance that was released by the Departments of Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services indicates universities could keep providing subsidized health insurance for its graduate student employees indefinitely that was prohibited by one of the IRS regulations.

Minimum Stipend & Assistantship Types

Formation of a working group that may include Dean of Graduate School, Dean of Student Affairs, interim CFO, Chief of Human Resource, Provost, and GSO President is in progress. The University administration (Dean of Graduate School, Interim CFO, Provost and Chancellor) has been consistently reminded that the review of minimum stipend is extremely important and the administration should finalize the decision by the end of January 2017 as many of the schools and colleges starts sending the offer letter of assistantship starting from February of the academic year.

Long-standing Issues

Review of Career Services for Graduate Students This is one of crucial concerns that most of the graduate students currently have, therefore, it needs to be resolved on a high priority. The Chancellor tasked Peter Vanable, Dean of Graduate School to work in collaboration with Provost and look into the possibility of an exclusive review of career services for graduate students. Based on my latest conversation with Peter, it seems that no significant progress has been made so far by the university administration despite the consistent reminder by the GSO leadership.

Ombuds office Unfortunately, the university has not done much on this issue and no plans or working groups are in place yet. This has been a long standing issue now. It appears that this issues is not on the priority list of the University. It is understandable that creating an independent ombuds office and recruiting specialized staff may take time but no positive step has been taken since last six months despite the consistent reminder by the GSO leadership.

Child Care Task Force The university administration promised to the previous GSO leadership that a new Child Care Task Force will be created by the new Provost. It was also conveyed that the recommendations from previous Child Care Task force were impracticable. It has been about six months

that Provost has assumed the office but no action has been taken yet on this issue despite the GSO leadership brought this issue time and again.

I recommend that the Senate takes action on the above-mentioned issues such as to define a timeline for action and put forward a solution that would monitor the progress on these issues in future.