

Graduate Student Representative's Report for the Board of Trustees

Executive Committee Meeting, September 16th, 2011

Melissa Welshans, President of the Graduate Student Organization

I am pleased to provide you with my first report as the new President of the Graduate Student Organization. As Paul, our outgoing President, mentioned at the final board meeting in June, I was previously our organization's recording secretary and am very excited about serving in this capacity.

This year the GSO intends to focus on expanding and improving services we already offer, while still exploring new ways to meet the needs of Syracuse University's Graduate Student population. Part of achieving this goal includes re-arranging some of our spending priorities to direct resources to where they are most needed.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, our Travel Grant program doubled in size as we received requests for travel funds from roughly 120 students in the amount of \$48,000. Unfortunately, we were only able to fund half of the total request, roughly \$22,000. In light of this increase in demand, our senate voted to provide supplemental funding to the program for its summer 2011 applicants. And, for the coming academic year, we are increasing our support of this program by \$5,000 (25%) as we expect demand for the program to continue to rise. However, to accommodate this expansion we had to reduce our support for other services like Drumlins Country Club.

The GSO continues to view our Travel Grant program as supplemental support to help Graduate Students participate in important academic and professional conferences across the country and around the world. By sending SU Graduate Students to places where they can work with other members of their intellectual communities, we continue to increase Syracuse's notoriety and bolster the reputation of our Graduate Programs. I see the expansion of this program as indicative of the need for more comprehensive travel support for Graduate Students across SU, and we are hesitant to increase its size without a matching of support for these students from departments or the university at large. Far too many students come to us without funding support from their own departments, which is no doubt a symptom of the economic troubles we are all facing in this recession. This year we hope to work with the university to think of creative ways that departments and colleges can help students participate in this much needed part of professionalization.

This year, the GSO will also work to create events and services that cater more directly to one of the largest growing portions of our student body: Masters and Professional students. With the help of the Graduate School, the Office of Off Campus Life, and Career services (to name a

few), we will continue to develop professional as well as social programs to aid in improving the SU Graduate experience of these students. In fact, this year we have already begun aiding incoming Master's students in the creation of Graduate-only Student Organizations that will fund their activities in part through the GSO as well as their own colleges, and their response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Concerning campus improvements, we are excited to see the addition of new bus routes to the James Street, Hawley Avenue and East Genesee Street areas. As Graduate Students often occupy housing in these neighborhoods, we foresee this addition improving the safety and ease with which Graduate Students can travel to main campus.

Finally, I would like to address an issue that Paul, my predecessor, raised at the Board's final meeting in June. As Syracuse University continues to increase its Graduate Student population, we would like to ensure that colleges and departments across campus provide Graduate Students with the best resources and information when it comes to tuition stipends and assistantships. As Graduate Students must often rely on their own resources to pursue their educational endeavors, we would like to work with the university on improving communication concerning assistantship funding and term limits so as to increase students' abilities to complete their degrees and reduce the time it takes to do so. With more adequate information about the amount of funding and years of support, incoming Graduate Students will be able to make informed decisions on whether or not to pursue a degree at SU and how they can support themselves while doing so. The GSO has already been in contact with Dean Ware and Associate Provost Hurd concerning the possibilities for studying this issue.

The Graduate Student Organization looks forward to an exciting year of growth and change, and I know I speak for all of Syracuse's Masters and Doctoral students when I say thank you for your continued support.