



Graduate Student Representative's Report to the Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees Meeting, November 8, 2013

Patrick Neary, President of the Graduate Student Organization

Student Engagement and Outreach

Over the past six months, the GSO has focused on engaging with traditionally underserved segments of the graduate student population, as well as increasing awareness of the GSO within the grad student body. This summer, we sold deeply discounted Empire Passports, allowing students to visit state parks for free. This program was very popular amongst international students, students with children, and part time students, all of whom are traditionally underserved. This semester, we are funding reduced cost events through Recreational Services, which have proven very successful amongst the international graduate student body. In addition, we have increased our communications to the students, including working with the Daily Orange for increased coverage of the GSO and growing our social media presence. Our wine and beer tasting events continue to bring in more students, and the fall picnic was a smashing success, with a record turnout of 850 grad students.

Assistantship Living Wage

The GSO has put forward a proposal to increase the minimum graduate assistantship pay to a reasonable level corresponding to a living wage for the city of Syracuse. This proposal is based on data obtained from the survey conducted of all graduate assistants in spring 2013. Our data suggested a living wage level of \$19,350 for a nine month contract window, compared to a current minimum of \$12,155. The survey further indicates that 59% of students on assistantships earn less than this minimum living wage.

I have met with the University Senate Budget Committee and Gwenn Judge, Director of Budget and Planning, who have responded very positively to our request. The Graduate School also supports the proposal. We are currently working together to find a good solution, particularly on finding an acceptable living wage target number, a process of incrementally increasing the minimum, and absorbing the additional expense. I am working with Gwenn on determining a total cost, but currently the impact appears to be comparatively small.

Strategic Planning

The GSO is beginning a strategic planning exercise to provide future leaders with a vision for the GSO. We will be holding a series of open forums to talk with the broader graduate student body about the mission and goals of the GSO, as well as its financial priorities. We hope to use this to draft a strategic planning document, and a final student fee increase proposal, early next semester.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to graduate education!