



Graduate Student Representative's Report to the Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees Meeting, May 10, 2014

Patrick Neary, President of the Graduate Student Organization

As the semester ends, the GSO begins to plan our priorities for the coming year.

Graduate Assistant Minimum Stipend

Over the course of the last year, the GSO discussed graduate teaching and research assistant stipends with a number of administrators, resulting in a recommendation to increase the minimum stipend. I urge the trustees to approve this increase, improving graduate program quality and attractiveness.

Childcare Subsidy

The GSO supports Kal Alston and her office's efforts to create a childcare subsidy program for students, similar to the program that currently exists for faculty and staff. Starting a family on an assistantship stipend is difficult in the best of cases, a situation amplified with the physical space constraints of the university daycare centers. I urge the trustees to approve the creation of this subsidy program.

Libraries and Graduate Students

The GSO continues to urge higher funding levels for the libraries at the university. Holes in the principle collection and a lack of quality study space continue to make research work difficult for students in many programs. The newly renovated Reading Room in Carnegie Library is celebrated by graduate students as a premier location on campus for scholarly work, and we thank the trustees for their support of the project. I also want to acknowledge the increases in library funding that have occurred. However, additional work is required to bring the libraries to a position of preeminence on campus.

Clarity and Honesty in Graduate Programs

The GSO continually reaches out to its constituents, adjusting our priorities as needed. A new area of focus in the coming year will be improving the relationships between graduate students and their departments and programs. This is a wide ranging topic area, covering many issues. The GSO pushes departments to be more honest and accurate in their estimates of program length. We are encouraging programs to make and communicate assistantship renewal decisions to their students earlier in the year, and make clearer when initial funding commitments change. We are also looking for ways to better enforce university standards on graduate stipends. The unifying focus for the next year is to improve departments' transparency toward graduate students, and inform students more quickly about financial matters, to allow these students to better plan for their future.

I believe that graduate education has a bright future at Syracuse University, and look forward to another year partnering with the trustees and the administration to improve the graduate experience.