



Graduate Student Representative's Report to the Board of Trustees

Executive Committee Meeting, October 9, 2014

Patrick Neary, President of the Graduate Student Organization

Sexual Assault and Student Affairs

Concerns over the university's Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Response Team and related structures continue to dominate students' minds. The rally on September 17 exemplified the deeply held frustration and distrust held by many students toward the administration. There is a broad fear of additional shutdowns of treasured centers, such as the LGBT Resources Center and the Student Disability Union, a fear that has not been addressed. While the Workgroup on Sexual Assault has begun meeting, more open and honest communication is needed with the student body on what is happening with regard to sexual assault services and any potential changes within Student Affairs generally. In addition, this distrust is causing a core group of students to discredit the Fast Forward process. The GSO encourages continued messaging on Fast Forward and what it means for students.

Student Representation on Key University Groups

The GSO, jointly with SA, continue to have concerns over the process of choosing student representation on university bodies, particularly dean search committees and advisory groups. While this is not a universal problem, both GSO and SA have been circumvented when student representation is needed in multiple instances within the past six months. This reduces the legitimacy of these groups in students' eyes and damages the legitimacy of the student governments. We are pushing several university officials and offices to be more committed to approaching the GSO and SA when in need of student representation.

Graduate Assistantship Stipends

Graduate students are very appreciative of the increase in the minimum assistantship stipend passed last year. We continue to look for additional increases over the next two years, consistent with previous conversations with the Office of Budget and Planning. We are lobbying for two more years of 8% increases in the minimum stipend. The GSO is very interested in working to find ways to absorb this increase into the budgets of any units affected by this proposed change. Generally, the GSO continues to find the lowest stipend levels unjustifiable when taking into consideration the limiting language in the assistantship contracts concerning outside employment.

Library Funding

Graduate students remained concerned over the state of the university's libraries. The renovations to the Carnegie Reading Room and the ongoing renovations of Bird library are well appreciated, but there are deep concerns over the viability of Syracuse University as a research institute given the libraries' current funding level. Major holes persist in principle collections, and reports from graduate students in various departments across campus indicate the libraries are still attempting to relocate or remove books and journal resources due to insufficiencies in space and funding. For graduate students, this can directly affect the viability of our programs and the reputation of our degrees. We urge the Office of Budget and Planning and the Trustees to find ways to significantly increase the libraries' funding.