



Report of the Graduate Student Representative to the Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees Executive Committee, April 16, 2015

Patrick Neary, Graduate Student Organization President

Academic Strategic Plan

We are excited to see the Academic Strategic Plan released publicly on April 2 for open comments. The plan was built in a highly collaborative fashion across the university, an example of transparency and openness that should be used in other projects at SU. Due to this transparency, we expect mostly positive comments from graduate students. While no plan will be satisfactory to all students, we are very pleased that it contains strong support for graduate programs at both the professional and doctoral levels. We also look forward to the implementation phase and further student involvement then.

Student Health Insurance Changes

The GSO broadly supports the new requirement that all students hold qualifying health insurance. However, we have a number of concerns about the implementation process which we are currently addressing with the various working groups attached to the project. Specifically, international students have brought numerous concerns to the GSO about coverage regulations, cost increases, eligibility of their current plans, and their overall options. Often these concerns are very specific to the individual students, and so we are primarily seeking ways these students can have their questions answered. We are waiting on the consultants at Gallagher to finalize information documents and set up a call center in order to answer these questions. We continue to push Gallagher for an aggressive timeline, as the current go-live date of May 1 will be very late for many international students who are traveling to home countries soon after final exams finish on May 5.

Additionally, the GSO thanks the university leadership, especially Rebecca Reed Kantrowitz and Ben Ware, for reversing the decision to remove graduate teaching, research, and other assistants from the employee health insurance plans. We look forward to discussing health insurance options and subsidization plans over the coming year to determine the best way forward for these student employees.

Many students have communicated with us their disappointment that, once again, major decisions that substantially impact students' lives were made without meaningful consultation and input from students. Plans have recently been put in place to involve students in designing the 2016-2017 student plan, as well as the aforementioned plan to keep graduate student employees on the employee plans until agreement can be reached with the GSO on alternate solutions. The GSO is thankful that we will be included in discussions moving forward, and hope that future projects of this scope will include student leadership earlier in their development cycle.

Transition Plans

The GSO will elect new officers on April 22 at the GSO Senate's Elections Meeting. Strong candidates have come forward for all offices due for election. We anticipate a strong, talented, and dedicated team leading the GSO into next year. Of note, three current Board members have voiced interest in running for positions, as well as several other students. We are confident that this will provide for maintenance of institutional memory as well as new perspectives in the organization. The current Board is preparing for its transition in two months to ensure a seamless transition to our new student leadership team.

Smoking and Tobacco Ban

The GSO is excited to see the new smoking and tobacco plan implemented this summer and fall semester. While some students have voiced concerns, we remain committed to supporting the new policy, as it represents a significant step forward toward better public health. We plan to work with relevant university offices to help publicize and promote the new policy and promote a new, healthier, smoke and tobacco-free culture on campus.