

GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION  
COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA  
Monday, March 3, 2008 - 2:00 p.m.  
Student Union Room 208

**Members Present:**

Dalon Rosevear (Accounting), Joseph Pignatiello (MBA), Aaron Kearsley (Economics), Madalina Tanase (Curriculum & Instruction), Katrina Harris (Educational Psychology), Dan Gianoutsos (Educational Leadership), Mia Youhne (Special Education), Dana Massengale (Sports Education Leadership), Hamidou Diawara (Civil & Environmental Engineering), Lei Zhang (Electrical & Computer Engineering), Saul Opie (Mechanical Engineering), Rebekah Just (Art), Brian Marsh (Music), Oscar Limon (Theatre), Lyndsey Kelly (Health Physics), Donica Beckett (Health Promotion), Sonia Randolph (Kinesiology), Courtney Coughenour (Public Health), S. Zelaya (Proxy for Nursing), Gael Hancock (Hospitality Administration), Jason Frank (Sport & Leisure Activities), Sara Hill (Anthropology), Robert Kirschen (English), Jordan Duff (Political Science), Eric Tomas Steiner (Psychology), Candace Griffith (Sociology), Becky Cox-Hess (Chemistry), Colin Robins (Geosciences), Jason Vance (Life Sciences), Matthew Jacobsen (Physics), Melanie Taylor (Criminal Justice), Emerald Laija (Environmental Studies), Rachel Wax (Journalism & Media Studies), Sara Pelton (Marriage & Family Therapy), Tyra Jenkins (Public Administration Proxy), Gary McCormick (Social Work), Jeremy Ashton Houska (President), Heather Lusty (Vice President), Jessica Lucero (Secretary), Suzanne Becker (Treasurer).

**Members Absent:**

Ingrid Y. Lee (Management Information Systems), Laurene DeBord-Fouk (Film), Alistair In (Physical Therapy), Timothy Waters (Mathematical Sciences).

**Others Present:**

Nicholle Booker (College of Sciences Advisor), Dr. John Zimmerman (Accounting Professor), Keoni Everington (TLC), Derek Lester (Education), Rebecca Boulton (GPSA manager)

**I. Roll Call**

The GPSA Council Meeting, held in the Moyer Student Union, Room 208 was called to order by President Houska Monday afternoon at 2:00 p.m.

- II. Approval of Minutes:** President Houska asked if there are any corrections to the February 2008 GPSA Minutes. After hearing no corrections, a motion for approving the February 2008 minutes was made by Brian Marsh (Music) and seconded by Colin Robins (Geosciences). With no oppositions, the motion was passed.

**III. Speakers**

President Houska announced that Speaker Eric Lee would be hosting a Q&A session for Graduate Assistants directly after the GPSA meeting at 2:30. In addition, President Houska introduced Dr. John Zimmerman.

Dr. Zimmerman discussed taxes that affect graduate students. He noted that if a student is single with a child, he or she should file as "head of household." Additionally, if the student is separated (even if he or she is still legally married) for six months, the student can still file as "head of household."

Dr. Zimmerman suggested that students take advantage of the “student lifetime learning credit.” He mentioned that the “hope education credit” doesn’t really apply to graduate & professional Students. Instead, graduate and professional students should file for “lifetime” because this option allows the student to take 20% of his or her qualifying educational expenses (up to \$10,000 dollars) for tuition and fees. For example, if the student paid \$2,000 in tuition and fees, he or she could get a \$400 credit on the tax return.

Additionally, if the student made tuition and fee payments in December of 2007 for 2008, he or she could still deduct this amount for 2007.

Students should go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and download form 8863. This website will also provide instructions regarding who will qualify for this; however, Dr. Zimmerman cautions students that if his or her income exceeds \$47,000 and the student is single, then the student would begin to lose part of the credit. He noted that this credit can be taken even if the student is not in a degree-granting program (in other words, if the student is taking courses to improve his or her life).

Dr. Zimmerman opened the floor for general questions.

Dana Massengale (Sports Education Leadership) asked if the credit of \$250 for “teacher’s credit” could be applied to Graduate Assistants. Vice President Lusty noted that this option is for K-12 and is located under “miscellaneous job-related expenses.”

Dr. Zimmerman added that the problem with filing for the “teacher’s credit” is that the student most likely won’t have enough items to deduct to qualify for this credit.

S. Zelaya (Nursing Proxy) asked Dr. Zimmerman if scholarships are taxable. Dr. Zimmerman replied that most scholarship monies are not taxable, but that there is a problem in defining what constitutes a scholarship for universities versus government definitions. He also noted that the student should not file for the “lifetime learning credit” if he or she is having tuition and fees paid through a scholarship.

Dalon Rosevear (Accounting) asked for clarification regarding scholarships not being taxable. For example, do books qualify under scholarships as nontaxable? Dr. Zimmerman answered that books paid by a scholarship are not taxable but that room and board is.

Jason Vance (Life Science) asked Dr. Zimmerman if money paid for medical premiums could be written off. Dr. Zimmerman said that the problem with this is that medical expenses needs to exceed 7.5% of one’s income before anyone could get a deduction. In other words, the student has to pay thousands of dollars out of his or her own pocket before any deduction could be made. His guess is around \$7,000 to \$8,000.

President Houska asked if people had additional questions to send them via email and the GPSA would be sure Dr. Zimmerman would get them. Dr. Zimmerman offered that students could call him at extension 51335.

#### **IV. Budget Report**

Treasurer Becker noted that there were changes to lines 15 & 16 of the budget. These lines reflect the February wages and fringe benefits of the GPSA office staff. Line 21 did not change because there was no out-of-state travel expenses for the month of February. Line 30 reflects operational costs, which includes changes due to hosting expenditures, council meetings, as well as the February social hour. Line 30 also reflects costs incurred for routine maintenance of copiers and printers, purchasing

of paper and toner and the airline ticket for the upcoming board of regents meeting. Additionally, the GPSA purchased two laser remotes for the research forum. Line 68 reflects the revenue generated by incoming student fees. The GPSA is still collecting these fees and will continue to collect these fees as well as summer fees. Line 79 reflects the sale of items like snacks, water, copies, etc. in the graduate lounge.

President Houska asked if there were any questions and hearing none asked for a motion to file the budget for audit. Candace Griffith (Sociology) motioned for approval and Joseph Pignatiello seconded the motion. Upon unanimous approval from the council, the budget was approved for audit.

## V. Committee Reports

- **Activities Committee:** Secretary Lucero announced that the next GPSA social would be held that Friday (March 7, 2008) from 4 – 7 p.m. at the Paradise Cantina. Secretary Lucero then turned the floor over to Activities Committee member, Emerald Laija (Environmental Studies).

Emerald Laija noted that last semester the GPSA had a volleyball team but that only a few students were able to participate. She asked the council if they would be interested in the GPSA having a field day some Friday afternoon either after Spring Break or two weeks later. She noted that the GPSA could either meet on campus or at Sunset Park and do an egg toss or similar field day activities to promote the GPSA and networking. She noted that she would like to see at least fifteen people sign up. After little commentary from the council, Secretary Lucero suggested sending an interest email to council members and other members of the GPSA out via the listserv. Emerald Laija agreed.

- **Community Service:** Treasurer Becker noted that the committee had nothing new to report.
- **Grants Committee:** Vice President Lusty explained that there was an increase in the amount of students asking for grants this emergency cycle. There were two Spring grants that cancelled, so the committee rolled them into February's emergency budget due to the twelve applications. The committee awarded all twelve applicants but not all of them received the full amount requested. The total amount awarded was \$4,842.50.

Vice President Lusty also noted that the summer grant deadline was fast approaching and would be here by March 15, 2008. She requested that council get the word out to their constituents.

Vice President Lusty reminded the council that the Research Forum would be held at the end of March (March 29) and that volunteers and faculty judges were still needed. If the council wishes to volunteer—to greet people or time presentations—they should contact her immediately. She also said she would greatly appreciate the assistance in finding more faculty judges. She advised council members to ask junior faculty because judging the research forum would give them service credit, which helps in tenure-promotion.

Vice President Lusty announced that Michael Bowers, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, is looking for a graduate student to sit on the steering committee for the 2010 accreditation committee's visit. The graduate student who sits on this committee will be needed for a total of two years. Dr. Bowers specifically requested the graduate student be someone from the GPSA council. Brian Marsh (Music) asked how much time the graduate student would need to commit. Vice President Lusty was unsure but did not think the committee would meet for days or hours at a time. March 14, 2008 is set to be the first meeting of this steering committee as this is the day that one of the representatives from the accreditation committee would be on campus. Brian Marsh (Music), Sara Hill (Anthropology),

Jeremy Houska (President), and Jessica Lucero (Secretary) expressed interest in serving on this committee.

- **Board of Regents:** President Houska announced that the Board of Regents would be meeting next month in Reno regarding the tuition and fees increase. Currently, UNLV is set to increase its graduate student fees 10% and undergraduate student fees 5%. President Houska noted that this increase is reasonable but that the tuition and fees committee is still not satisfied.

Additionally, there is discussion regarding a system-wide research conference, in which UNR, NSC, and UNLV will be working towards this goal in the coming year.

- **Student Funding Activity Board:** Candace Griffith (Sociology) reminded the council that this board is run out of Student Life and that they are willing to give up to \$750 per student event. She requests that interested members fill out the application form. She thanked Office Manager Boulton for making the application form a PDF file on the GPSA website under “other funding.” Interested parties would fill out this form and turn it in no later than the Friday before the Student Funding Activity Board’s Monday meeting (they meet just about every second Monday of the month). She noted that the spirit of the award is to help the student body in some way. Generally, conference travel is not included in this grant, unless the conference in some way will lead to a University-wide forum. Students can use the money, however, to bring speakers into UNLV to give a talk to students. Candace also noted that the award amount has gone up from \$500 to \$750.

President Houska asked if the pot or allocations are made public? Candace said she did not know. In fact, the amount of money in the budget is also unknown.

Rebekah Just (Art) asked if this funding is open to undergraduates and graduates? Candace answered in the affirmative.

**VI. Old Business:** none

- VII. New Business:** President Houska presented to the council a bylaw revision. He also noted that council members could see new per diem rates from the government website, which is how the GPSA calculates per diem. The change to the bylaws reflects this website and the other changes will benefit graduate students. He noted that the information in red font represents new information added to the existing bylaw and the texts with a strikethrough are items to be deleted from existing bylaw.

Rebekah Just (Art) asked if this bylaw change would affect the grant requests that are due on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March. Vice President Lusty answered yes.

Brian Marsh (Music) asked if the GPSA was moving from a fixed rate system to a variable system. Vice President Lusty said that the changes in per diem are variable depending on location. For instance, places like Chicago or international locations would be rated at a higher per diem rate than Boise. The website will break this change down.

Rebekah Just (Art) motioned for approval of bylaw change and Aaron Kearsley (Economics) seconded the motion. President Houska asked for a vote by hands majority. He noted two down; the majority of the committee was in favor and the changes to the bylaw passed.

- VIII. Announcements:** President Houska asked if there were any announcements and turned the floor over to Tom Steiner (Psychology).

Tom Steiner (Psychology) is chair of the elections committee and announced that there were two handouts regarding the executive board elections for the GPSA in the packet handed out to each council member. On these handouts, council members can find the GPSA contact information and application. These applications are due in the GPSA by Friday, April 4, 2008. Each candidate will make a speech at 2:00 p.m. to the council at the April 7, 2008 council meeting. Ballots will then be cast and all other GPSA members will be able to vote in the graduate lounge until Friday, April 11, 2008. All voters must be graduate or professional students and must have valid UNLV ID. Each student is allowed one vote. On April 11, 2008, the elections committee will count the votes and the winners announced by Monday, April 14, 2008. Tom Steiner asks that council members please post this application and announcement in their respective departments. He also asked that members of the election committee stay a few minutes behind the GPSA meeting for a quick meeting.

President Houska announced that Tuesday, March 4, 2008 was GPSA Awareness day and would take place from 10 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.. The volunteers included Emy Laija (Environmental Studies), Candace Griffith (Sociology), Donica Beckett (Health Promotion), Heather Lusty (Vice President), Jessica Lucero (Secretary), and others.

President Houska also announced that if anyone is interested in establishing an organization, they should apply from the GPSA so that the GPSA can provide broad-based support.

Keoni Everington from the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) announced that there are technology workshops being offered for graduate and professional students through the TLC. March 4, 2008 would be SPSS training, March 6 would be Second Life training, and March 10 would be geographic information systems training. Becky Cox-Hess (Chemistry) noted that the Chemistry department was not aware they could post onto the UNLV server and asked Keoni Everington if the department is required to attend the workshop. Keoni Everington replied no that the student help desk has easy-to-follow flyers and can offer assistance.

Candace Griffith (Sociology) announced that anyone interested in immigration issues should attend a lecture put on by the Women's Studies department at Houssels House. The lecture will be about undocumented students and education and will begin at 7 p.m. on March 5, 2008.

Jason Frank (Sport and Leisure Services) announced that he works with UNLV Student Activity Services and is looking for tutors. The pay is \$12.50 an hour. The subjects that need filling include Kinesiology, Business, Accounting, Biology and more. Dalon Rosevear (Accounting) asked what the hours are like. Jason Frank noted that the hours are flexible. It could be a couple of appointments a week; it just depends on the tutor's schedule.

Dana Massengale (Sports Education Leadership) asked if anyone knew about an IRB open forum that is supposedly held every Friday. Sara Hill (Anthropology) said that the IRB office sends out emails with forum dates and times fairly regularly and to find out when they're being held that way. She also noted that anyone dealing with human subjects would find this forum very beneficial. Derek Lester (Education) added that students could also call the IRB office and make an appointment. He said the director's name is Brenda.

**IX. Public Comment:** None.

**X. Adjournment:** President Houska asked if anyone would like to motion for adjournment. Brian Marsh (Music) motioned for adjournment and Courtney Coughenour (Public Health) seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 2:39 p.m.