

VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

Bree Richards

Wednesday, December 6th, 2006

Madam President & Distinguished Assembly Members,

Since the last Assembly meeting, here is what I have been doing:

1. GAPSA Website
2. NAGPS Conference
3. Project: Check It resolution
4. Student Senate meeting
5. University Senate meeting

1. GAPSA Website

The GAPSA website has finally been switched over to the University's central servers. As a result, the executive board no longer has their @gapsa.umn.edu e-mail addresses, and the staff e-mail addresses have changed as well. Please see the website (gapsa.umn.edu) for details.

I will be training our office assistant, Heather Sparks, on updating the website and she will be taking over this responsibility.

2. NAGPS Conference

I was in Seattle at the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students 20th Annual National Conference from November 15-19. Along with Suzanne, Mufaddal, and Alissa, I presented "Engaging Graduate and Professional Students in Student Governance Through Programming," which was one of the best-attended break-out sections of the conference. Minnesota was the best-represented group at the conference, and it was clear that our graduate and professional student government was very well-organized and structured compared to other groups nationally, in part due to a solid infrastructure and system of support from the University. We got a couple of ideas for initiatives to work on in the future, including some we've done in the past ("Impress the President").

I also navigated during the trip, and held the map upside down the entire time. Thanks to Josh for successfully and patiently driving the 12-passenger van and doing the opposite of the directions I was giving.

3. Project: Check It resolution

Max Page, the President of MSA, is now a co-sponsor of the Project: Check It resolution. It has been updated to reflect that it is being proposed as a joint resolution between GAPSA and MSA. Suzanne and Mac have been in correspondence with Carolyn Chalmers from the Office of Equal Opportunity, and we have been addressing concerns and logistics.

4. Student Senate meeting

The SSCC did not meet for lack of agenda items to discuss. I attended the Student Senate meeting on November 30. Notable things that came out of that meeting:

- GAPSA and CAPA will be beginning to liaise in order to keep each group updated on what issues the other is covering.
- We approved the extension of the terms of membership on committees. They are now two years instead of one year, and half will turn over every other year. This helps preserve institutional memory.
- There was a presentation from a commercial cell phone/PDA recycling company about starting this on campus. The Student Senate voted to bring the issue back to each respecting governing body/organization. I highly recommend we do not participate in this program – while it is great for the environment and has the potential to earn some money for the school, there are vast privacy and theft concerns. The “drop boxes” are simple cardboard, and are extremely portable, making the cell phones/PDAs easy to take. If someone does not clear their memory card prior to dropping their device in there, and it is stolen, there is a giant compromise on their address book members’ privacy (as well as their own, with appointments, personal information, etc.). The company did not have an adequate solution for this problem.
- The chair of the Student Senate, Josh Beiningen, is graduating, so there was an election for chair. Dan Moore, a representative from Morris, is the new chair of the Student Senate for the spring semester. I remain the vice chair.
- Leslie Krueger and Jerome Malmquist from University Services presented on the University’s sustainability initiatives, which are vast and awesome. If you would like details, please let me know.

5. University Senate meeting

I attended the University Senate meeting, also on November 30. Notable things that came out of that meeting:

- The administration responded positively to the recommendation that a food and nutrition expert be added to the RFP for on-campus vendor contracts.
- The SCC reviewed proposed changes to the code of conduct to include all employees, not just researchers, and also reviewed the student code of conduct.
- The extension of the membership terms was passed unanimously.
- The Disabilities Issues Committee recommended that University policies, procedures, programs, and services also be extended to guests of the University. This change passed. There was significant questioning about how accessible University websites are, and whether this puts the University at risk for lawsuits (Target is currently being sued for having a non-accessible website). The DIC will explore this issue further. For more information, please contact the chair, Patrick McNamara.
- A bylaws amendment was passed about the role of the Senate Consultative Committee – some language had inadvertently been left out. It now states that the SCC will report policies and actions to the USenate for information, and the USenate has the authority to reverse or modify a decision made by the SCC.

- Another bylaws amendment was passed to remove the classification “attorney” from eligibility to vote in Senate elections and serve on Senate committees. It also specifies that an individual who is a voting member of the Senate committee and is then appointed to a position which would bar them from service shall resign except in certain circumstances.
- The Faculty Affairs Committee statement on tuition benefits for dependents of University employees passed. This recommends that tuition benefits be offered to dependents under some specific criteria. This will now be presented to the Board of Regents.
- The president addressed a question about whether the proposed Rochester satellite would be a coordinate campus for governance purposes. It would not at this time, because it is not an accredited campus that can give degrees. That may change as the program expands.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:**Textbook Task Force**

There is one opening for a student representative from the University of Minnesota. The remaining meeting is on Thursday, January 25th, 2007, at the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, 1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 350, St. Paul, MN. If you are interested in representing University of Minnesota students on this task force, and can attend this meeting, please contact me ASAP.

Student Senate open seats

There is one position still open for each of the following schools:

Dentistry

Nursing

Pharmacy

Public Health

CEHD

Senators would need to attend all Student Senate meetings as well as University Senate meetings. The schedule for these meetings can be found here:

<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/meetings/ssccmtg.html>. If you would like to fill one of these open positions and are able to attend the meetings, please contact me ASAP.

Mentoring

If you are interested in mentoring a high-achieving undergraduate student (part of the President’s Distinguished Faculty Mentor Program), please contact me for details.

Thank You,

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