

February 27, 2007

Madame President & Esteemed Assembly Members:

My first month as Vice President of Public Affairs has been both busy and productive. During this time I began planning efforts for the 2007 “Support the U” Lobby Day scheduled for March 28, 2007; provided GAPSAs with a student presence at the Minnesota Legislature; assisted with the hiring of a Public Affairs office assistant; began planning a trip to lobby the Minnesota Congressional delegation in Washington, DC; and met with various administrators, staff and students in order to familiarize myself with this position and identify a means of maximizing my efficiency and effectiveness in office. A fuller description of these efforts is provided below.

“Support the U” Lobby Day. In February, I attended two meetings with University staff and undergraduate students aimed at identifying and establishing promotional strategies, potential rally speakers, a schedule of events, food and busing arrangements, and other logistical concerns related to the lobby day – scheduled for March 28, 2007.

Representing GAPSAs at the Minnesota Legislature. Throughout February I attended hearings in both the House and Senate Higher Education Committees. Highlighting the dramatic increase in tuition rates, the high level of student indebtedness upon graduation, and the University’s standing among its Big Ten peers with respect to graduate and professional school tuition, I provided the Senate Higher Education Committee with testimony in support of the University budget request.

Public Affairs Office Assistant. Upon completion of a brief but thorough interview process, Ms. Elizabeth Neils was hired to serve as PA office assistant for the remainder of the term. In addition to implementing an office bill-tracking system and addressing everyday office tasks, Elizabeth will be our point person for neighborhood outreach and community engagement per her request for added responsibility.

Bill-Tracking System. After meeting with University Relations staff and ascertaining current resources, I have begun work on a bill-tracking system that will provide GAPSAs with a means of following legislation affecting University graduate and professional students as it works its way through the legislative process in St. Paul. This way, we will be able to stay informed, participate, and maximize the strength of our voice at the Capitol.

Federal Lobby Trip. Work is underway to plan a lobby trip to Washington, DC, in order to visit with members of Minnesota’s Congressional delegation on issues affecting University graduate and professional students. I am working with University Government Relations staff in order to select a time and establish talking points that will make our trip a success.

In sum, my first month serving as Vice President of Public Affairs has been both challenging and rewarding. Surely, the learning curve is steep. Nonetheless, I look forward to continuing my work on behalf of GAPSAs and the broader graduate and professional student body in the coming months.

Thank you,

Matt Schmit