

PGSA Committee Meeting
21 October 2014

chair: David Garand
vice president: Andy Hesselbrock
treasurer: Jacques Pienaar
secretary: Antoine Martin

attendants:

Peter Anderson
Mri Damodaran
David Garand (president)
Andy Hesselbrock (vice president)
Mary Ann Hodge (PGSG senator)
Antoine Martin (secretary)
Darryl Masson
Kelsie Niffenegger (teaching & professional development)
Jacques Pienaar (treasurer)
Valentyn Stadnytskyi (grad seminar)
Brendan Sullivan (research progress & human resources)

Minutes:

18:04 – Meeting begins.

funding:

- Deadlines for submitting applications for money are 10/24 and 12/5.
- Our money request include the following:
 - Grad Seminar Series: five more this Fall and more yet for Spring 2015
 - general PGSA meeting with pizza
 - social events
 - Indiana Dunes trip
 - Chinese New Year
 - potlucks
 - Adopt-A-Highway—Brendan will look into this community-building, community service possibility.
 - Outreach Day—Andy will look into this with David Sederberg and perhaps try to obtain the physics van.
 - ropes team building course—David Garand will look into the cost etc.
- tutoring:
 - This past year, we used undergrad tutoring as motivation for asking for \$800 for furniture.
 - Peter suggests tutoring local urban children.

- How do we decide how much money to request for these activities?

18:24 – Grad Seminar (Valentyn):

- Jordan Kendall will give a talk Wednesday 10/29. He must submit an abstract and title a week in advance.
- Should we nominate any professors whose research is of interest to give one Grad Seminar talk? Would any be willing to do it mostly to advertise their research, for no pay? We could then encourage especially first-year students to attend.
- Other potential speakers for this semester are David Garand, Valentyn Stadnytskyi and Jonathan Nafziger.

18:32 – department T-shirts

- Darryl and Jacques will work on the T-shirt orders.
- The new shirts will have the updated Physics & Astronomy department logo.

18:33 – meetings with Prof. Hirsch

- prelims
 - A recent survey indicates that only about 25% of survey takers seem to think they know what the prelim is.
 - We need to meet with Prof. Haugan to define prelims, say when they should take place etc.
 - There is enough negative feedback to take action. Many students find themselves in n^{th} year (where n is sufficiently large), have not yet completed their prelims and will still need to wait at least a year afterward to defend.
 - Peter: We should create a secondary survey for students about the prelim.
 - The grad student manual says only that a prelim should occur but fails to define it.
 - We should survey professors to find out what they think prelims are.
- 18:43 – courses for next Fall (2015)
 - Should there be more AMO courses to reflect the growing population of AMO professors in the department?
 - Peter: Quantum Field Theory (QFT) counts twice, independently, for students who take it twice, because of the variety of possible approaches.
 - Kelsie or Peter can write a survey to find out what courses (especially 570 courses) grad students want offered.
 - Our department ought to offer an advanced lab or electronics lab course, or even both.
- 18:48 – matching students with professors
 - It sounds like several professors have RA positions that remain unfilled. We should see if this is a specific issue or due to the research topic.
 - Should we create a blog or record, accessible to physics grad students, which advises them about professors for whom to work?
 - We should create a survey to find out what students want from their potential advisors.
- 18:53 – teaching assistantship guarantee

- Incoming students are guaranteed four years of teaching assistantship, though many students in n^{th} year ($n > 4$, in some cases even $n \gg 4$) still get teaching positions. This is generous compared to many departments, which guarantee only two years.
- Our department will gradually reduce this TA guarantee to two years (but heck, “what’s a factor of 2 among friends?”)
- 18:54 – 590 courses
 - First-year students should immediately be assigned professors with funding and similar research interest with whom to do a 590. This would allow them to sit in on research group meetings, obtain background knowledge and potentially find potential advisors in less time than the current average.
 - PGSA sort of officially agrees that such a program would be a good idea.

19:00 – PGSA website (Harshad [absent])

- Progress is reported, and Harshad will share an update at next meeting.

19:02 – October social events

- With dying interest in the corn maze at Exploration Acres and any haunted houses, PGSA is counting on next month’s Thanksgiving potluck to revive its own social nature.

19:03 – Meeting ends.

59 minutes
