

PGSA Committee Meeting
9 December 2014

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

attendants:

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

Minutes:

18:02 – Meeting begins.

18:03 – finances (David)

- We are still waiting for some of the money we thought we were supposed to get.
- If we get funding, we should, in principle, submit an expense report for each semester, but in practice, we have never done this nor faced any consequences.
- We should find out on 12/11 whether we obtain the \$1291 October grant.

18:07 – department apparel (Jacques)

- We sold 21 shirts, to be delivered on 12/17.
- If we sell no extra shirts, we will make a small profit.
- 18:08 PGSA should contribute some volunteers to perform community work on Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2015.

18:09 – Physics 570 survey (Mri)

- 66 students took the survey. The most popular 570 courses were as follows:
 - 1st: Prof. Love's QFT
 - 41 were interested.
 - 24 would enroll.
 - 17 would audit.
 - 2nd: string theory
 - 3rd: atomic physics
- Why are so many students interested in high energy physics?
- This has been shared with Prof. Haugan

18:14 – survey on students' expectations from advising professors (Brendan)

- The survey reveals that students have a wide range of desired qualities in advising professors; there is no clear consensus.

18:16 – Prof. Hirsch's ideas to help grad students get out of the department sooner (by graduating, that is, not getting kicked out)

- If many students do not stay in the department during the summer at the end of their first year, why?
 - Very few graduate classes—virtually none besides 590s and 600—are offered at that time.
 - Much fewer teaching positions are available than during spring and fall semesters.
 - Paid research positions are scarce.
 - Kelsie's suggestion: why not let grad students teach grad classes during the summer?

18:25 – Institution Memory (David)

- The Institution Memory would be a document put together for the benefit of newer grad students searching for advisors. Senior or former students would describe, preferably more objectively, the professors for whom they had worked and the working conditions in their research groups. It might take one of these forms:
 - exit survey, anonymous or not (Anonymity seems pointless for the case in which a professor has not yet finished advising many students since the birth of the Institutional Memory).
 - grad student-exclusive forum
 - simple word of mouth (not much of a document at all)
 - list of mere facts, possibly more public, regarding research with different professors, excluding explicit opinions

18:39 – safety meeting (Mri)

- emergency plan
- Grad students in the department get no chemical safety training but probably should in many cases.

18:46 – machine shops

- Will the Instrument Shop move out of the Physics building?
- Faculty Shop hours
 - Brian: Could the Faculty Shop hours change given that few students would show up as early as the opening time but many would like to work past closing time?
 - Could a “buddy system,” whereby two qualified students would be allowed into the Faculty Shop with no additional supervision, be implemented to make the shop available at more times?

18:51 – suggestion box

- Can we ask the department or PGSG for copies of Mathematica and MATLAB for all students in the department? No one likes using the remote access.
- Can we get grad student fees waived (or at least automatically taken out of paychecks)?

18:58 – Can we plan a nuclear reactor tour as a spring semester social event?

18:59 – prelim / grad manual

19:03 – social events

- ice skating in December or January (preferably the latter to avoid finals, winter break and warm weather)?
- Brian is the new social events coordinator after the committee votes him into office.

19:05 – grad seminar (Valentyn)

- Potential speakers Valentyn asks have a tendency to say they will be able to give a talk later.
- potential speakers:
 - Shayne Reichard (He will have his prelim soon and must, therefore, have a talk to give).
 - Ajith (defending soon)
 - Jacques
 - faculty member in the spring?

19:10 – website (Harshad)

- Harshad presents the website in its current state and asks for photos for it.
- A photo of the PGSA committee is taken.

19:21 – Meeting ends.

79 minutes
