

***Council of Graduate Students, General Assembly Meeting,
February 19th, 2009, Coffman Union, President Room***

1. Two Announcements
 - Geoff Hart—*Sound of Music* on Friday night
 - Kristi Kremers—nomination for president of GAPSA by March 2nd; executive positions also open
2. 5:45p.m. Moving to approve minutes (approved)
3. Dean Gail Dubrow led a discussion on the Graduate School restructuring
 - Concerns for the restructuring: need to weigh the various functions of the Graduate School and decide which are best to decentralize and which are best to centralize
 - Advice for students: make yourself visible; use existing organizations: executive committees, R&R Councils, Constitution of the Graduate School
 - Personal philosophy: transparent advocacy; shared governance (plans need to be informed); evidence drives decisions (make decisions based on careful studies and facts); not a job protectionist; excellence is not the way to evaluate educational programs but student experience
 - COGS should lead the evidence-based decision-making process
 - Decentralization rarely saves money; the process hasn't been articulated well; in the absence of information, rumors and miscommunications take hold

Questions and Answers

- Boyd Cothran: You heard the news of the restructuring the day the email went out?
Dubrow: Yes, about an hour or so before it was announced. The Provost talked about cost saving during the summer but not this plan.
- Matt Kaplan: Did you talk to the Provost about the restructuring after it was announced?
Dubrow: Yes. I asked the Provost to come to the Graduate School to talk to the people.
- Student: It's said that in spite of the economic downtime, the cutting of staff salary is down the list?
Dubrow: Considering the annual budgeting of staffing, it's quite efficient. Cutting staffing will result in poor services to the students. As services are essential to students, staffing ought to be largely protected.
- Vladimir Gidzak: Is restructuring more about costs than excellence?
Dubrow: We are entitled to explanations about what's driving this. Is it money, political, or that Deans want more control? I don't know because there are now public evaluations.
- Student: Can you suggest where we might look for evidence, and from whom?
Dubrow: At the very least, deconstruct the message sent out. Are you confident with the information presented to you? What you want to get the best education? If not, you need to make sure your representation at the implementation team.

- Geoff Hart: In the Provost's memo, he stated other schools which are also doing this new model. But there are lots of other schools that don't have this model. Would you talk more about this?
Dubrow: What are other kinds of reasoning around the room?
Student: The mentioned 4 schools are good schools, but correlation doesn't equal causation. It's not necessarily due to the decentralization.
Dubrow: Exactly. Excellence in what ways? What is quality? Is it only about program ranking? There has been a lack of attention to sexual harassment in MIT and it's still a bad place to work for female students and faculty. It depends on how we define quality and excellence.
- How much influence is the restructuring going to have on individual colleges?
Dubrow: Based on size of colleges. But also depends on the cultures of different colleges.
- Matt Kaplan: How can COGS continue to best serve as an organization?
Dubrow: It's going to be messy form COGS. It's just easier to function in a centralized system.
- Kristi Kremers: Is the Implementation team going to solve the problems?
Dubrow: The Provost really doesn't have a plan or conspiracy. How much public consultation do you expect? You have a stake in transparency.
- Student: What's the impact on international students? ISSS services?
Dubrow: There hasn't been resolution about this.

Dubrow's concluding remarks: This is just to help you honestly. Please don't turn this meeting into gossips. Thank you!

4. Transparency Resolution
 - Geoff Hart: The rationale behind this resolution is that despite the economic crisis, there is a right way to do things.
 - Discussion
 - Resolution passed at 7:07p.m.
5. Discussion of letter to Provost's office
 - Geoff Hart: will send out the final letter to everyone
6. 7:30p.m. moving to discussion of future of COGS
 - Matt Kaplan: Who has the final say?
 - Carol Powers: It's voted on by the GA meeting; the Constitution has to change; constituency will change.
 - Dubrow: stick to principles but go bigger in scale
 - Kristi Kremers: should involve the Board of Regents and hold them accountable
7. Extended meeting for 10 minutes
8. Discussion of "Why should I care" draft

Adjourn