



# COGS GRADLETTER

COUNCIL OF GRADUATE STUDENTS | UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA - TWIN CITIES

November 2007

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### Cheap Parking for Graduate Students

COGS and GAPSA have successfully negotiated a special night and weekend parking rate for grad students and SPACE IS LIMITED. If you are interested, please see the Parking and Transportation Services website <http://www1.umn.edu/pts/staffcontracts.htm> for more information.

### New Executive Committee Members

The COGS General Assembly overwhelmingly elected three new executive committee members:

**Jenny Corcoran:** Vice

President of Communications

**Matthew Kaplan:** Vice President of External Relations

**Sarah Stoddard:** Health Sciences P&R Chair

## A Note from the President

I hope the semester has been a good one for you! At COGS we've been busy. Resolutions this semester have included support of the AFSCME workers who were on strike at the beginning of the semester and an expression of support for the Central Corridor light rail tunnel. Our last meeting of the semester will be a busy one with resolutions on student representation on the UMore Park committee, support for student-led efforts to combat child abduction in South Sudan and support of residents of Commonwealth Terrace Co-op against the use of certain herbicides at CTC. Another issue we are working on at COGS is the workload increase that is happening in many programs, and the impact this has on graduate student quality of life and time to degree. Are there other issues you think COGS should be tackling? I invite you to get involved in the coming semester. If you aren't able to commit to a position, volunteer to serve as an alternate. Please let us know what you want us to work on, we work for you! Contact us at [cogs@umn.edu](mailto:cogs@umn.edu) with your concerns and ideas. Good luck with the busy end of the semester activities.

—Carol Powers  
COGS President

## What is COGS?

COGS is the representative body for all graduate students at the University of Minnesota. It is our mission to represent and serve the needs of graduate students by working with the graduate school and university administration, sponsoring events and programs helpful to students, and by appointing graduate students to important university committees such as Policy and Review councils or University Senate. The GradLetter is one of our three primary means of communicating with the graduate student body. These newsletters are distributed two to three times per year as summaries of COGS projects, important issues affecting graduate students, and opportunities for involvement. Also look for email Extras to announce up-coming events or important information requiring immediate attention. Our third way of communicating with you is through your program representative to the COGS general assembly, so make sure your department or program is sending someone on your behalf. For more information, see our website [www.cogs.umn.edu](http://www.cogs.umn.edu).

## New Executive Committee Members, Senators

Jenny Corcoran, from Earth, Water and Soil department, was nominated and then unanimously elected Vice President for Communications. Matthew Kaplan, from the Rhetoric department, recently filled the open position of Vice President of External Relations. Both Matthew and Jenny arrived in the executive committee with a full slate of issues to tackle and ideas to pursue. Sarah Stoddard from Nursing was elected to chair the Health Sciences P&R council. Chris Miller (Psychology), Benny Xin (Biomedical Engineering), Elliot James (History) and Matthew Kaplan were unanimously elected and confirmed as Senators. Senate meetings are the first Thurs of each month.

**Resolution for AFSCME Support** The strike by several bargaining units of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) drew a lot of attention from the COGS membership. The GA meeting that was scheduled to be held during the second week of the semester was postponed so that a suitable off-campus location could be found to hold the meeting. While many opinions were carefully weighed, the final decision to move the meeting date and location was made so that those who wanted to show their support for striking workers by not crossing the picket line could still voice their opinion at the meeting. The first GA meeting of the 2007-2008 school year was held at Vescio's in Dinkytown, and was packed with opinions on a resolution to support the AFSCME strike. After protracted deliberation, the resolution was modified to the satisfaction of the majority and passed by a narrow margin. The strike ended the next day.

**Resolution for Washington Ave Tunnel** The Central Corridor light rail line soon that will run along Washington Ave to service the U. A debate has ensued as to whether this section will be above or below ground, and COGS along with GAPSA authored a resolution in support of a tunnel. COGS unanimously passed this resolution this October.

**Spielberg Committee** At the first GA meeting, Geoff Hart planted a seed that gave rise to the shoot that is reaching for the sun. The film committee for which he has ever-longed has now been formed, and there are many more ideas than the committee has time to pursue. Be on the lookout for a film series in the near future, and if you want to be involved, send an email to [cogs@umn.edu](mailto:cogs@umn.edu) with the subject heading Spielberg.

## Brainstorming at GA Meeting

While torrential rains buffeted Vescio's on September 20, 2007, a storm of a different sort indoors provided an ocean of ideas to be pursued this year. Some have been addressed, some have not yet seen the light of day. If any of these pique your interest, be sure to come to the next GA meeting or send an email to [cogs@umn.edu](mailto:cogs@umn.edu) so your voice will be heard!

**Evening campus connector frequency** 10 instead of 15 min.

**Explaining line items on student accounts** e.g. point-and-click interface in the student account summary at onestop student

**Parent help center** Not helping grad students!

**Resources for future teachers/teaching methods** and feedback [Course time blocks]

**Alumni exit poll** how can we better prepare ourselves for the outside world?

**Grad wages** Where do these come from;

- Is there a way we can balance between faculty and student wages?
- Number of students per TA
- Reader/graders who do not get first pay check until after student fees are due (penalty fee waiver?)
- Wage gaps between different colleges

**Film series**

## Dissertation Fellowship Workshops:

Reserve a spot or get more information by sending an email to: [cogs@umn.edu](mailto:cogs@umn.edu), subject DDF Workshop Reservation Request.

- Dec 4: 2 pm Moos Health Tower 2-530
- Dec 5: 12:30 pm, St. Paul Student Center 202

## RESOLUTION

*Council of Graduate Students – University of Minnesota*

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**Date: September 12, 2007**

**Authors: Bryan Gordon and Eli Meyerhoff**

**Topic: Graduate Students Support Unionized Workers in Contract Negotiations with University Administration.**

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*Whereas*, the research and education of University graduate students is unimaginable without clerical, technical and health care workers;

*Whereas*, no part of the mission of the University of Minnesota (Research and Discovery, Teaching and Learning, and Outreach and Public Service) is possible without these workers;

*Whereas*, persons working for the University deserve a livable wage, job security and opportunities for advancement;

*Whereas*, AFSCME workers' salary has declined by 5%, adjusted for inflation, since 2002, while administrative salaries have increased by an average of 27% in the same time, as the Minnesota Daily noted 15 August 2007;

*Whereas*, other state, county and municipal workers in Minnesota have been given a 3.5% inflation-based adjustment to their base pay, not including step increases, while the University has offered AFSCME clerical and technical workers 2.25% and medical workers 2.5% increases to base pay, as the Pioneer Press noted 3 September 2007; and

*Whereas*, AFSCME has supported graduate students in their struggles for better wages and working conditions:

*Be it resolved*, that COGS censures members of University Administration including Director Vicich and Vice President Carrier for disingenuously claiming that step increases constitute livable-wage increases;

*Be it further resolved*, that COGS rejects University Administration's divide-and-conquer tactics and instead challenges all University units to stand up for AFSCME workers as we would stand up for ourselves;

*Be it further resolved*, that the Council of Graduate Students (COGS) stands with workers and calls on President Robert Bruininks, University Administration, Human Resources and the Board of Regents to respect AFSCME workers' contributions by negotiating a fair contract that guarantees a livable wage, affordable health insurance, job security and opportunities for advancement; and

*Be it further resolved*, that COGS supports AFSCME members in their strike for the above purposes.

## RESOLUTION

*Council of Graduate Students – University of Minnesota*

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**Date: September 26, 2007**

**Authors: Kristen Denzer, GAPSA President; Bree Richards, GAPSA Vice President for Student Affairs; Kristi Kremers, GAPSA At-Large Director; Geoff Hart, COGS Senator**

**Topic: Support for the Central Corridor Light Rail Line to go Through a Tunnel on Campus.**

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*Whereas*, the Central Corridor Light Rail Line will be going through the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Campus on Washington Avenue; and

*Whereas*, a considerable percentage of the ridership on the Central Corridor Line will be University of Minnesota students, employees, and visitors; and

*Whereas*, according to the Federal Railroad Administration, "deaths in grade crossing accidents are the second-leading category of deaths associated with railroading"<sup>1</sup> and "elimination of at-grade crossings... offers the greatest long-term promise for optimizing the safety and efficiency of the two modes of transportation"<sup>2</sup> (trains and motor vehicles); and

**Whereas**, the benefits of a tunnel appreciably outweigh the added upfront material costs; and  
**Whereas**, a tunnel under Washington Avenue for the Central Corridor cannot be added once the line is completed without significant cost and construction; therefore  
**Be it Resolved**, that the Council of Graduate Students supports the plan for the Central Corridor Light Rail Line to go through campus via an underground tunnel on Washington Avenue.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Railroad Administration Action Plan for Addressing Critical Railroad Safety Issues, 16 May 2005, p. 9, [http://www.fra.gov/downloads/safety/action\\_plan\\_final\\_051605.pdf](http://www.fra.gov/downloads/safety/action_plan_final_051605.pdf) (10 September 2007).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration. Federal Railroad Safety Accountability and Improvement Act (proposed), p. 10, <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Downloads/Counsel/legislation/2007RailSafetyBill.pdf> (10 September 2007).

## Biology P&R Council Report

The Biology P&R council recently convened and I wanted to let you know the highlights that came out of this meeting. Dean Dubrow presented a new potential graduate school policy were students would be allowed to do collaborative group theses and dissertations. Let it be said that this policy caused much intrigue, confusion, and heated debate about what a thesis and dissertation should be and the possible benefits and pitfalls of such a policy. Later, I gave a report highlighting the resolutions that COGS has been doing over the last year, and Jennifer Corcoran told the committee about our upcoming resolution asking for student representation on the UMore Park committee. The university is planning on developing UMore Park with a sustainable community that will house ~ 25,000 residents. The Biology P&R Council saw the need for student input into this far reaching project as many current and future stu-

dents' lives will be directly impacted by UMore Park, so we drafted a resolution in the meeting stating the support of the Biology P&R council for having student representation on UMore Park Committees moving forward. This resolution will go to the executive committee for consideration. Lastly, I spoke about the results of our graduate survey last year, and the striking data that graduate students were lacking opportunities to obtain resources for professional development. This point was taken on board, and we must make sure that the Graduate School takes measures to establish a strong professional development program specifically for GRADUATE student needs as we are at a different place in our career development than undergraduates.

–Geoff Hart  
Biology P&R Chair

## Please Contact Us:

### Your 2006-2007 COGS Elected Representatives

#### Officers–

**President:** Carol Powers, Applied Plant Sciences (power134@umn.edu)  
**Executive VP:** Bryan Gordon, Linguistics (gordo225@umn.edu)  
**VP for Communications:** Jenny Corcoran, Soil, Water, and Climate (jencor808@gmail.com)  
**Parliamentarian:** OPEN

**VP for Internal Relations:** Eric Grashorn, Physics (gras0057@umn.edu)  
**VP for Finance:** Andy Exley, Computer Science (exley@cs.umn.edu)  
**VP for External Relations:** Matthew Kaplan, Rhetoric (kapla123@umn.edu)

#### Policy and Review Council Chairs–

**Biological Sciences:** Geoff Hart, Microbiology... (hart0792@umn.edu)  
**Health Sciences:** Sarah Stoddard, Nursing (stod0015@umn.edu)  
**Language, Literature, and Arts:** Eden Kaiser, Linguistics(kaise113@umn.edu)

**Education and Psychology:** Caroline Hilk, Educational Psychology (hilcx006@umn.edu)  
**Engineering, Physical and Mathematical Sciences:** Scott Johnson, (scottj@cs.umn.edu)  
**Social Sciences:** Eli Meyerhoff, Political Science (meyer0781@umn.edu)