Agenda for May 6, 2009

Officers
President—Heather Lee (American Civilization)
VP, Administration—Nitin Jadhav (Engineering)
Treasurer—Anthony Evans (Psychology)
Technology Officer—Stefanie Sevcik (Comparative Literature)
VP, Social—Ratnesh Gupta (Engineering), Sumit Kumar Soni (Engineering)
Secretary—Michael Antosh (Physics)

Attendance: 34 representatives plus officers.
I. Approval of the Minutes from the April Meeting
Approved.

II. Invited Speakers
   i. Beppie Huidekoper, Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration
   Presentation on fiscal year 2011. 3 major components of budget – education
   and general (most school things) $550 million, biomed $130 million,
   auxiliary $80 million (room and board, bookstore, civic fees). Flat budget for
   fiscal year 2010 – down in biomed but up in auxiliary. Fees increased 2.9%.
   Expectation is for giving to go down but financial aid to go up. How to deal
   with it? No salary increases helped for $9 million. We locked in almost a flat
   rate for the next 5 years for utilities. Cut $6 million from education general
   and biomed budgets each. 67 administrative positions will be emptied – 36
   were empty anyway. Decisions were made by senior officers. We’re slightly
   overenrolled in the grad school, and no faculty are going on leave.

   Fiscal year 11 planning – things will get harder. We need to cut $30 million.
   There were concerns about how quickly the 2010 budget changed, but that
   was caused by the economy’s quick change. Assuming a 27% cut in
   endowment revenue this year, 5% next year, then 5% increases again, we will
   lose about $40 million in endowment revenue each year with what we were
   hoping and planning for. Brown is assuming 10% drops in giving as well.
   Our fees will increase, but so will financial aid by more. Looking for $50
   million increase in revenue over 5 years, where the previous hope had been
   for $145 million. How to solve the problem? Freezing salaries for 5 years
   would be good but faculty would leave. It will have to come from other
   places. We need to cut $95 million total over 5 years, compared to
   expectation, and $60 based on what exists now. The plan is to cut $30 million
   of that by 2011 fiscal year end.

   Biomed division is mostly sponsored funding that looks fairly good, especially
   with the stimulus package. They expect a 3% revenue increase this year, vs.
   2% for the education and general.

   Many planned renovations/new buildings will not happen, and new human
   resources systems. This should be about $7 million in savings. They are
   hoping for $10-$20 million for administrative reorganization, and $5-$10
million in operating expenses (travel, supplies). No decrease planned in grad student support.

The budget for FY 2011 will be reviewed next February, and this fall there will be many discussions about how anyone can save money. The hope is for everyone to get a chance for input on this.

Questions – if things get worse, we will be more ready than we were earlier this year, because of how Brown has organized over these changes. Many jobs that were cut were involved in projects, which makes sense because of the cuts in renovations. Questions about the process can be directed to Executive VP Huidekoper or Dean Bonde.

One University Resources Committee rep voices that grad students should still support grad school expansion in the future, and that the two reps on the URC and the grad student on VP Huidekoper’s committee will be open to all grad student opinions.

Sheila Bonde, Dean of the Graduate School
Grad school funding is still stable! Number of grad students is just about the same. The Dean is looking to form a committee about the student experience at Brown. The extra support for the writing center will continue as well. Please alert the Dean to any more opportunities for new programs that worth funding, and to any possible external funding. In this year’s admission, the percentage accepted went down (“more selective”), and the percent that accepted admission went up (“higher yield”). The grad school is working with the City of Providence with regards to the head tax. As always, the Dean will continue to have open hours – check the grad school website for details.

III. Executive Reports and Announcements

i. Discussion: Head Tax
Providence has $60-70 million deficit. Mayor Cicilline is hoping to charge Brown (and all other private colleges in RI) $300 per grad student, which Brown will add to charges on students, and proposing the bill this week. There is talk of alliances with other schools, and searches for RI residents with stories of needing the money (if you know someone like this, contact President Heather Lee). There is a proposed resolution and also a petition proposed in this meeting (see end of agenda). The debates on each of these are listed after them.

ii. Announcement: TA assignments
Move to older system – make sure all TA assignments are filled. May affect 7th and 8th year funding.

iii. Budget: GSC summer activities
Matches $8,000 from last year. Blocks of tickets to events, among other things. Perhaps a block party barbeque.

iv. Announcement: New GSC Working Group (on funding compared to other schools) Listserv
Information will be on website.

v. Announcement: GSC Webpage, June 15
Will be updated by then.

vi. Discussion: Yoga
We are looking for ways to keep grad students from paying extra. The lowest cost for a professional is $100-$150 per 90 minute class. A contract will be proposed in the fall.

vii. GSC emergency contacts
For arriving new students. Will be set up.

viii. Vote 2: Constitutional Amendment: Article III, Officers
Same as last month, needs to be approved twice. All new sections are approved unanimously.

IV. Funding Requests: Amount—Purpose—Student or group:

i. $200—Daniel Block—Duke, North American Society for the Study of Romanticism
5th year English department grad student. Budget is $588. Would be second conference of this year, with the goal of networking for being on the job market this fall (and getting feedback on his thesis. He will be presenting. Approved unanimously.

ii. $200-Lyra Montiero—OSU “Future of the Ancient”
5th year archaeology. Grad student conference on making classics relevant. 2nd conference of year – she is in two different programs here at Brown. Overall budget $250 (flight, meals). Two programs is rare. Approved unanimously.

iii. $200—Derek Seidman—University of Pittsburgh, Work Class Studies Association
He discovered funding in his department, withdrew.

iv. $200—Sean Dinces
Not here.

v. $200—Elizabeth Bennett—Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL
2nd conference, asking retroactively. Was considered for funding by her department for this, but was told right before that funding had dried up. Total budget was $290 (plane, public transport, etc.). Presented at conference. She went before we voted for funding conferences. Debate: This would be retroactive funding, which many have a problem with. But, she was denied funding just before she went which she had been hoping to get (she was told it was very likely). An amendment to eliminate retroactive proposals will come in the fall. Vote – 13 pass, 9 no.

vi. Education program summer program –$400
For master’s of arts in teaching, to help students learn to teach. Hoping to get students bus passes. Total budget is $2,000. This is not open to all graduate students. Vote: pass unanimously.

V. External Committee Reports and Announcements

i. Allison Fong—Campus Center Planning Committee
Tony Evans is the other rep. Faunce House will become a campus center at Faunce House. It will be closed next academic year for renovations. The old
post office area will be open as an events space, however. The Blue Room may go to Solomon or the new post office events space. Celebration tomorrow 5/7 in Blue Room from 3-5pm, a chance to comment and ask questions. Or you can email Allison Fong.

VI Group Recognition
   i. Human Defense Initiative (Robert Ren-Pang)
      Outreach to children in foreign countries. Vote: pass unanimously.

VII. Other News
   i. Open floor
   ii. Next GSC General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 9 at 7 p.m. in the Graduate Student Lounge.
Proposed Additions to the Constitution and By-Laws

Constitution:
Article III: Officers
Section 1: The GSC shall elect as its officers a President, a Vice President of Administration, two Vice Presidents of Social Events, a Treasurer, a Secretary, a Technology Officer, and a Master’s Student Advocate.

Section 3: Officers shall preside for the term of one year, except the Master’s Student Advocate. The Master’s Student Advocate shall preside for the term of one semester. Elections for this office will be held at the beginning of each semester.

Section 13: Acting as a liaison between the GSC and the master’s programs, the Master’s Student Advocate shall outreach to the community of master’s students and offer the perspective of master’s students to the GSC board.

Head Tax Petition

We, the graduate students of Brown University, are members of the Providence community. We work and live here. We volunteer in the city's public schools and nonprofit organizations, as well as initiate and run programs that serve local needs. We also own property, spend money at local stores and restaurants, and pay taxes. We understand the challenges of the current economy and believe that students can make a positive difference. We are fully committed to working with the Mayor on finding creative and sustainable ways to improve the financial future of the city. We strongly disagree with the idea of imposing a new tax on students and believe that there are better solutions for student involvement than taxing the students.

Send to
Heather Lee
PO Box 1892
Resolution Opposing the Administration of a Student Head Tax

1. THE GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL,

2. NOTING with concern the May 2009 proposal\(^1\) by Providence Mayor Cicilline to implement a $300/yr head tax on students attending private colleges and universities in Providence, and

3. CONSIDERING the tax-exempt status of the private colleges and universities as institutions, and
4. MINDFUL of the fact that students are not currently subject to any special, advantaged tax status, already paying required taxes and fees to the city and state in the form of sales tax, state income tax, taxes and fees assessed on utilities, and property taxes (levied either directly on students as owners or indirectly via rental payments to landlords);

5. WHILE FULLY AWARE of the budget difficulties of the City of Providence given the recent economic downturn, is nevertheless

6. DEEPLY DISTURBED by the apparent singling out of students at private institutions as a particular group to be subject to additional taxation, and

7. OPPOSES the implementation of any special student head tax or levy by the City of Providence or the State of Rhode Island, whether charged directly to students or charged indirectly by assessment on the private institution with which they are affiliated.

8. CONSIDERING the many contributions of the private colleges and universities to the city of Providence in the form of jobs, improved medical care, and programs which sustain the vibrant cultural, artistic, and intellectual life of the city, and

9. CONSIDERING the contributions of the students as individuals as volunteers in local schools and with local civic groups to educate the children of the city of Providence and provide services to the underserved, and

10. NOTES further that while a student head tax might increase the revenues of the government of the City of Providence, it would likely adversely affect local businesses as student discretionary income previously spent at local shops and restaurants is proportionally lessened, and

11. THEREFORE URGES that the Providence City Council and the Rhode Island General Assembly decline to consider such a student head tax and that the Mayor withdraw his stated proposal.

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Debate on number 10 (10. CONSIDERING the low income and comparatively small budgets upon which students subsist, particularly in light of the effects of the recent economic downturn):

Suggestions to strike it, mention only that we are in a very low tax bracket, or keep as is. Strike – 17, tax – 9, keep – 1. Stricken.

Vote on resolution: pass unanimously.