Rackham Student Government
Board Meeting: January 26, 2011

Agenda

I. Call To Order

II. Officer Reports
   a. Graduate Student Body President, Michael
   b. Graduate Student Body Vice President, Mayela
   c. Graduate Student Body Treasurer, Mindy

III. RSG Logistics
   a. Social Gathering Update
   b. Food @ Meetings Policy Revisited
   c. Representative and Executive Office Hours

IV. I Already Graduated Day “IGAD”

V. Winter 2011 Goal Setting Session
   a. Student Services
   b. Financial Affairs
   c. Internal

VI. Individual Projects
   a. Description
   b. Assignment
   c. Semester Plans

VII. Elections Committee Membership

VIII. Open Discussion

IX. Adjournment
Welcome to the February 1st edition of your student government’s newsletter and student body update! Your Rackham Student Government (RSG) exists to serve you and to make your time at Michigan the best it can be. RSG continuously strives to make your life better, both by providing high quality social events as well as advocating on your behalf within the University and beyond. Last year, some students raised concerns regarding the Graduate School’s proposal to implement a policy of continuous enrollment for its PhD candidates. In response to these concerns, and working collaboratively with Dean Weiss and the Graduate School, a dispute resolution board was created to address any of your concerns regarding Continuous Enrollment. This board is comprised equally of graduate students, appointed by RSG, as well as Rackham assistant and associate deans. To date, the board’s services have not been utilized. If you are experiencing any problems relating to the transition to continuous enrollment, please contact Darlene Ray-Johnson at Rackham (rayj@umich.edu).

There are currently a few vacancies on two bodies that RSG appoints graduate students to sit on. The first is the Continuous Enrollment Dispute Resolution Board (mentioned above) and the second is the Rackham Appeals Panel which hears appeals relating to allegations of academic or professional misconduct against graduate students.

- Graduate students interested in applying to serve on the Continuous Enrollment Dispute Resolution Board should visit http://rsg.umich.edu/content/cedrb for more information and to complete the application no later than February 11, 2011.
- Graduate students interested in applying to serve on the Rackham Appeals Panel should visit http://rsg.umich.edu/content/apiapply for more information about the panel and to complete the application no later than February 7, 2011.

Successful applications for both the Continuous Enrollment Dispute Resolution Board and the Rackham Appeals Panel will be reasonably familiar with the University, be fair-minded, and are able to exercise good judgment.

The majority of RSG’s work takes place at a committee level. RSG currently houses five standing committees and one temporary committee. All graduate students are encouraged to learn more about our committees and to get involved by attending a committee meeting. (A list of committees and their upcoming meetings times appears later in this newsletter) Committee activities range from planning our upcoming St. Valentine’s Day mixer to lobbying the Congress of the United States on issues ranging from the taxability of your fellowships to allowing spouses of international students to work while in the United States, and a myriad of issues in between. Should you have any questions about RSG’s committee work or would like more information before you get involved, please email rsg-exec@umich.edu, my Vice President, Treasurer, and I are ready and willing to guide you through RSG’s committees and help you find one where you can explore the issues that matter.

It’s hard to believe, but elections for to serve as a representative on RSG’s board as well as to serve as graduate student body president and vice president will be taking place next month! If
you are interested in running for any of these positions, please consider attending a committee meeting to familiarize yourself with some of the current issues that RSG is addressing. Also, in preparation for the election, RSG is currently searching for a motivated student to serve as our election director. The successful candidate will work with our elections committee to oversee and manage the upcoming election. For more information about the elections in general and about the position of election director in particular, please visit http://rsg.umich.edu/content/elections2011

On behalf of all of your elected RSG representatives as well as your Vice President, Mayela Montenegro, and your Chief Financial Officer, Mindy Waite, I thank you for reading this newsletter and for contacting us (shameless plug, I know) with your comments and or problems that you’d like us to address. We’re here to serve you!

Go Blue!

Michael
Michael L. Benson
President, Rackham Student Body
Ph.D Student in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
rsg-president@umich.edu
I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting between the Rackham Student Government General Board and Philip Hanlon (Provost) & Martha Pollack (Vice Provost for Academic & Budgetary Affairs) held on Wednesday, January 19, 2011, at 5:30 p.m. at the Rackham Graduate Building.

RSG President Michael Benson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Members Present: Michael Benson, Mindy Waite, Joshua Bow, Phil Esposito, Eli Eisman, David Cottrell, Tien-Huei Hsu, Katherine Fisher, Alex Emly, Ethan Eagle, Yu Zhang

II. INTRODUCTION OF GUEST SPEAKERS

III. DISCUSSION WITH GUEST SPEAKERS (Philip Hanlon and Martha Pollack)

TOPIC: Budget of the University of Michigan

PHIL H: Provost is the chief academic & budget officer and the Deans report to the Provost, who sets the budgets for the university (except for hospital, athletics, and housing). Is now thinking about next year’s budget. Can’t change energy costs, goods, interest on loans, but can control compensations, financial aid, new initiatives, belt tightening, tuition, and enrollment. This will all culminate in a June meeting, and feels confident in stability for next year. Unfortunately, the State Appropriation is still up in the air and is expected to drop 20% for the University. 20% of the University’s budget comes from the state, so this equals out to a 20% x 20% drop, which is a 4% drop in total budget. Whatever the governor proposes next month will be a strong indicator of the future.

MICHAEL: How far can we cut before we cut too much?

PHIL H: We can keep cutting a lot, as long as it’s done slowly and intelligently, but another 100 million is probably as far as it can go. Also, we are not just cutting to save money, but also to re-allocate funds.

ETHAN: What can graduate students do to lobby for money?

PHIL H: Gov. Snyder is open to the universities and understands U. of M’s value, but knows that everyone must sacrifice. Gov. Snyder would like to have the pain now, and then hopes that everything will improve. Students should tell of the value of higher education, but realistically there is probably not much students can do right now.

MICHAEL: Can the amount of aid for Masters’ students be increased?

PHIL H: Agreed- Masters’ degrees are very expensive. The University’s biggest financial is for undergraduates, then graduates. The Rackham Dean determines the graduate allocations, and these are consistent with supporting the University’s core values. Many schools also have their own financial aid budgets, and Rackham financial aid should increase with tuition.

ETHAN: Are there any new initiatives for student athletic facilities?
PHIL H: The student athletic facilities are now the responsibility of the Division of Student Affairs (as of July 2010). They're doing some soul-searching to determine who they want to serve: students, faculty, or staff. If they decide they are serving the students, they may impose a fee. Look out in February for the budget proposal.

MARTHA: One a different note, we are moving forward with IT rationalization to keep costs low by not duplicating services.

ELI: Can you give a specific example?

MARTHA: Central services are pieced together from individual departments or emails are put on a single system.

MICHAEL: Has the Google decision been finalized?

PHIL H: No, soon.

EHTAN: Some students don’t have access to Concur.

PHIL H: This isn’t our area, but we’ll let those in charge know.

ETHAN: Can student groups get access to purchasing power for travel and procurement?

PHIL H: Not sure. We’ll look into it.

TOPIC: GSRA

MICHAEL: There are some concerns about the GSRA initiative.

MINDY: Especially from the Biomedical grad students who don’t feel the unionization is an efficient use of student fellowships.

PHIL H: Any union could only function for a students’ role as an employee. Contracts would set minimum stipends, and these minimums would be equivalent to GSI minimum stipends. We currently set the minimum GSRA rate at the GSI rate now, so GSRA would probably get no benefit. I have concerns about the hiring process, in that your advisor could maybe not hire you on their grant because a union would require them to hire the “best possible candidate” for the position, which may not be you.

MARTHA: A union can only negotiate for you as an employee. Also, it’s important to understand the process. The initiative needs 30% of grad students’ signatures on cards, which triggers an election requiring 51% of those to vote in favor of unionization.

MICHAEL: We feel most problems can be solved internally and that RSG can help with this.

ETHAN: GEO appears to be targeting international/minority students. Our peers may not be educated about this process. What responsibility does RSG have to these students?

ALEX: The union reps only answer questions when they are asked. They do not otherwise give out necessary information.

MARTHA: If it came to a vote, the university would step in and give information out to students. Right now, it’s not in the bargaining. Also, the bargain currently rejected is for the university to remain neutral.
MICHAEL: Bio Science majors do long experiments, leaving little time for garnering information from info sessions. Also, we’re concerned that there are so few non-science majors running GEO.

**TOPIC: MISCELLANEOUS**

MICHAEL: How much money does athletics put into the general fund?

PHIL H: Tuition and a potion of Big 10 Network fees. 0 funds flow the opposite direction.

MICHAEL: We are part of SAGE and lobby for NIH/NSF funding, so we might be able to help get more funding for graduate students. Also, we’ve had some building service issues. Is it possible to make communication easier to get things done quicker?

PHIL H: We understand and want to hear your issues.

ETHAN: Credit load to grad students is awkward in terms of enrollment which requires students to pay for hobby courses (such as Glee club)

PHIL H: School of music was losing money, so we told them to enforce enrollment to make up for the loss.

YU: Many international students must take English courses. Classes by ELI have long wait lists and it’s difficult to get in courses. Can we expand this offering?

PHIL: Ok. I’ll look into it.

ETHAN: A three year moving average works for some programs but not others.

MARTHA: We’ve had some very hard constraint problems here. PIs have problems choosing GSIs when many students are taken up as GSRAs.

ETHAN: What one thing would you like us to have accomplished next we meet? And what one thing would you like to accomplish?

PHIL: We will focus on Concur and questions about planned responsiveness, as well as ELI. For you, I hope that you do your work in Washington and take seriously an effort to educate about GSRA unionization.

IV. Approval of Previous Minutes

Approved

V. OFFICER REPORTS

TREASURER

MINDY:
We have about $13,500 after disbursements were made for ice skating, bowling, and food.

VII. ADJOURN

The Rackham Student Government General Board Meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.
Rackham Student Government Academic Affairs Committee
Meeting 1: January 25th 2011

Attendance
Josh Bow, Tien-Huei Hsu, David Cottrell, Kristy Figel, Mindy Waite

List of issues from brainstorming session with entire RSG board (January 12th 2011)
1. GSRAs Unionization and GEO’s role.
2. Increase resources available for professional development
3. Issues associated with Continuous Enrollment
4. Rackham Dissertation Awards (who is awarding these, what is the process involved)
5. CONCUR and issues involving Masters and fellowship-funded grad students.
6. Increase study spaces for Masters students.
7. Masters degrees in traditionally PhD-only programs
8. “3-paper” rule (in which if you write three papers you are exempt from writing a dissertation)
9. Review of which courses can be cross-listed
10. Graduate student voice on the Board of Regents.
11. Re-working of departmental websites to ensure prospective students are well-informed

Meeting notes

**Budgeting:**
- $100.00 discretionary fund
- $600.00 for each town hall meeting (two meetings)
- $200.00 for pamphlets, GEO, etc.

**Town Hall meetings:** We may want to have a few different meetings across committees. We’ll ask for $300.00 for each meeting, and try to coordinate two at accessible locations on campus (e.g., Rackham building, library, etc.). Josh volunteered to print flyers. One early in semester
Action: Inquire about cost.

**GEO:** Issue to be addressed this semester. Inform new members of RSG about current issues.
Budget for informational packet/brochure - $200.00 proposed.

**Study space for master’s students:** Hatcher only allows carrels to be secured by dissertation-writing doctoral students. Kristy will inquire about actual policies, speak with master’s students about preferences, and determine an initiative, if appropriate.

**Departmental awards:** Find out the policy and procedure of awards, pertaining to ratios across departments. Especially pertaining to engineering students. Mindy will learn about these policies & procedures, and the ratio of master’s-doctoral students in engineering (i.e., which may account for disparity in awards).

**David’s question:** “What kind of power do we have?”

**Outdated department websites:** How can we get departments to update their websites regularly? Potentially develop a rubric or a list of standards to propose. Most specifically, the political science
department has an outdated site and critical information that is missing. David will find important background information.

**RSG website:** We need to update it.
The Continuous Enrollment Policy for Ph.D. students became effective at the beginning of the Fall 2010 semester. All active Ph.D. students, including those who had been on detached study or unregistered under previous policies and practices, are now registering in each fall and winter semester until the completion of all degree requirements, unless on an approved leave of absence.

In the fall semester, 5357 PhD students were registered, an increase of about 500 from the previous fall semester. In addition, 74 students had an approved leave of absence for family or dependent care, health reasons, military service, or personal reasons. Eleven students were registered at another educational institution, and were approved for extramural study status.

To keep the policy revenue neutral, the Regents approved a reduction in tuition for Ph.D. candidates of 15.4% for the 2010-11 academic year. This has ensured that the University does not receive any additional revenue from tuition for Ph.D. students as a result of the policy.

To prevent new costs from falling directly on students, Rackham worked with each school and college to create tuition fellowships to pay the tuition for those students who are making satisfactory academic progress, who would not have registered under previous policies, and who are now registered under the new policy. The funding that was budgeted for these tuition fellowships has been adequate to cover all of the cases of need.

Active monitoring of the experience with the policy this fall has allowed us to identify some individual students with special circumstances that required flexibility; in those cases Rackham staff have worked with faculty members to design solutions that will work for the students’ academic situation and for faculty and graduate programs. Rackham staff members are willing to assist any student who is concerned that he or she has been adversely affected by the policy; please contact Assistant Dean Shelly Conner (shellyah@umich.edu).

Rackham Student Government also worked with Rackham to develop a process for Ph.D. students who wish to dispute the equity and fairness of decisions made about them by program faculty in relation to the continuous enrollment policy. The process begins with a conversation between the student and the Graduate Chair in his or her own program; if necessary, Rackham staff members are ready to help students in understanding their options in this conversation. If disputes cannot be resolved
informally, a more formal process is available. The Continuous Enrollment Dispute Resolution Board has the authority to hear and resolve disputes that are not satisfactorily resolved using informal methods. The Board is comprised of equal numbers of Ph.D. students, who have been named to the Board by Rackham Student Government, and academic administrators, who have been named to the Board by the Dean of Rackham. So far all issues have been resolved successfully through informal means, and no dispute has come forward to the Board. But the Board remains available to all Ph.D. students if it is needed. For questions and assistance with dispute resolution, please contact Darlene Ray-Johnson at Rackham (rayj@umich.edu).