RACKHAM STUDENT GOVERNMENT
GENERAL BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 23, 2011
RACKHAM GRADUATE BUILDING
7:15 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Rackham Student Government General Board Meeting was held on Wednesday, February 23, 2011, at 7:15 p.m. at the Rackham Graduate Building.

RSG President Michael Benson called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

Members Present: Michael Benson, Mayela Montenegro, Mindy Waite, Josh Bow, David Cottrell, Yu Zhang, Katherine Fisher, Eli Eisman, Bob Nyambati, Alex Toulouse, Ethan Eagle, Lily Mancour, Tien-Huei Hsu

Guests: ∙ Darlene Ray-Johnson, Directo/Resolution Officer, Graduate Student Affairs, Rackham Graduate School ∙ Rachel Brusstar, The Michigan Daily ∙ Chen Li, former RSG Representative ∙ Dorothy Pirtle, Representative of the Students of Color of Rackham (SCOR)

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA / MEETING MINUTES

Lily motions to approve the meeting’s agenda. Ethan seconds the motion. No objections. Agenda approved.

Josh motions to approve the RSG Board Meeting minutes from February 16, 2011. Mindy seconds the motion.
AYES: 12
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 1

III. OFFICER REPORTS

a) PRESIDENT

MICHAEL:

Today’s Guest Speaker is Ms. Darlene Ray-Johnson from Graduate Student Affairs at the Rackham Graduate School. We will also be having a SCOR Representative come to speak about a funding request.

Chen Li has come to appeal her removal from the RSG Board. As President, I can remove members from the Board for failing to meet attendance requirements. Chen has accumulated a total of 4 unexcused absences: January 19, January 26, February 9, and February 16. At no point did I receive notification about Chen missing meetings. Chen was on the RSG list and was a member of the Budget and Communications Committee. She has not participated in any of the Budget
Committee’s email conversations on funding requests or in committee meetings. As a result, action was taken to vacate the seat.

**CHEN:**

I didn’t know until the end of January that I was a member of the Budget Committee. I’ve been traveling for the past 2 weeks and had sent an email to Mindy saying I would be gone. I was never informed about how many absences were accumulated due to illness or travel. The first absence was for the week I was sick with a cold. I never received an email, even when I had already indicated I wouldn’t be coming to the meetings. I asked Michael about the responsibilities for Representatives since this is my first semester, but I wasn’t told about the attendance requirement. I’ve been tracking the emails, but because I was away, I was not aware of the participation expected by a committee member. I feel there should be transparency to these processes, informing Representatives of their duties. I feel this is something that was not informed to me. Even after 4 weeks of absence, I did not receive an email from the RSG Executive Board, so I was not aware this was an issue.

**JOSH:** Did you get the meeting minutes via email?
**CHEN:** Yes, but I was out of town and didn’t have email communication.
**JOSH:** But you had an opportunity to read it?
**CHEN:** I read the emails when I came back, 2 days ago.

**ELI:** Were you informed that you were elected to the RSG Board?
**CHEN:** Yes, I was informed I was elected, but I was not informed about the attendance requirement or the absences. I believe I should have been informed.

[Chen leaves the room while the Board discuss the possibility of re-admitting Chen to the RSG Board.]

**ETHAN:** Mindy, did you get an email from Chen?
**MINDY:** Yes, I got an email saying that she wouldn’t be able to communicate with the Budget Committee.

**JOSH:** I remember being told of the attendance requirement at the first meeting. I’d be more willing to be more forgiving if there were personal accountability involved instead of “this was not my fault.”

**MINDY:** Michael’s weekly emails always say that if you’re not going to the meeting, to let him know.
**MICHAEL:** Yes, and most people are very good about that.

**ALEX T:** How rapidly would we be able to fill her vacant seat?
**MICHAEL:** The Communications Committee has been asked to draft an announcement about the vacant seat. We can choose to appoint someone who’s interested in the seat, or just leave it vacant until elections.

**LILY:** Is Chen only a member of the Budget Committee?
**MICHAEL:** She’s also a member of the Communications Committee.
MICHAEL: If Chen shows an interest to get involved, she can become an Associate Member and then become a full Member after several meetings. If she comes back to a couple of meetings to participate, she can, which would be my recommendation.

MINDY: I received the email from her about 1½ - 2 weeks ago.

ETHAN: I’d like to believe the best in people. She was here regularly at the end of last semester so she’s showed interest. I don’t see a reason to keep her out of the seat.

MICHAEL: We can bring her absences down to 2 or 3 absences, so the next unexcused absence will be reason for her removal.

ETHAN: She’s asking to come back now.

LILY: But if you knew you wouldn’t be here, you should’ve emailed.

Michael chairs the voting to overturn his Executive Decision of removing Chen, to give Chen her RSG seat back.
AYES: 5
NOES: 3
ABSTAIN: 4
Motion passed. Michael’s decision is overturned. Chen is re-admitted as a RSG Representative.

Mindy motions to reduce Chen’s absences from 4 to 2; the next unexcused absence will be basis for her removal. Ethan seconds the motion.
AYES: 10
NOES: 1
ABSTAIN: 2

[Chen enters.]

MICHAEL: Chen was voted to be reinstated. Had 4 unexcused absences, but the Board voted to lower it to 2. 1 more unexcused absence, and she will be removed from the Board. She is required to participate in the committees she’s a member of, including the Budget Committee.

Moving on to another issue, we’ll soon be discussing issues relating to the health insurance. I’m working on rescheduling Dr. Winfield to be a guest speaker at one of our meetings.

The Academic Affairs Committee will be meeting tonight after the Board meeting.

Please take a look at the Graduate Student Bill of Rights. We need to move on this quickly.

b) VICE PRESIDENT

MAYELA: No report.

c) TREASURER

MINDY:
IV. GUEST SPEAKER: Darlene Ray-Johnson
- Director, Graduate Student Affairs
- Been in Rackham for 8 years
- Has administrative oversight over things like workshops, social activities
- Health & wellness initiative
- Wears another hat – resolution officer
- Rackham’s Academic Integrity and Resolution Policy
- Revise Academic Dispute Policy a year ago; new policy
  - Encourages academic programs to ensure they have a policy and that it adheres to basic principles; confidentially, timeliness, earnest, process is transparent, and students aware of policies
- Met with Michael this week and shared that Rackham is looking at its Integrity Policy
  - Would love our feedback and input on it, after we’ve taken a look at it
- An issue with both policies is time it would take for students to file a complaint or have an allegation against him/her, and the time the issue was actually heard
  - Would like to make policies more efficient; user-friendly for students and academic units involved
  - Thinks it’s a good policy
- Other role as Resolution Officer – meet independently with students and address issues/concerns/connect them with resources
- Looking at Grad Student Bill of Rights; several students have asked about this
  - Hopes that soon there will be
  - Typically talks to students about faculty-advisor relationships; if students are having difficulty and thinking about switching advisors; talk about implications and what options are
  - Sees role to offer options, asking how long student has had relationship with advisor, who are experts in the field
- Spends time meeting individually with students
- Works on several projects, including continuous enrollment
- Sees role as providing support services to students
- Considers herself doing some advocacy on behalf of grad students

Questions:
ETHAN: I know it’s fairly common when disputes come up, there’s a crime report that comes out listing number of crimes, a public record of what’s taking place. Any thought on doing this with the dispute process, to describe the situation and the outcome?

DARLENE: There is a Resolution Board with Resolution Officers who are appointed. Also 4 grad students part of the Resolution Board. Struggles with making sure its prominent. Some programs are so small that any description of the dispute can give it away for the student. Has heard that there’s some merit, especially sharing with faculty so it can hopefully change some of their behavior. Given large number of Rackham students, there’s a very small number who go through resolution. In the formal process, there are less than 10 Rackham students who participate. On average, 80-90 in a calendar year who come in for different types of reasons.

LILY: Has it ever happened that a faculty member has been reprimanded in some way as a result of dispute resolution with student?

DARLENE: Doesn't see process as one to reprimand, however the whole purpose of these types of policies and having transparent policies so if a program/department doesn’t adhere to
policy, then there’ll be consequences. Yes, the Resolution Board has determined that programs have not acted properly and set of recommendations are imposed, going to the Dean to impose them.

MICHAEL: let’s say there’s a situation where professor/advisor is tormenting a student (mental anguish, etc), more than average. What recourse exists for grad students in these types of situations?
DARLENE: Conversations are confidential so students can speak freely. Outgrowth is how to manage so student doesn’t feel there’s a repercussion against him/her. Rarely is there an outcome where faculty member has found or mistreated a student – pretty rare. However, students are seeking an outcome where they can remain whole, so they may decide to switch advisors or programs – this has happened. So I can’t go in and investigate because I can’t share what’s happened without the student’s permission. Determining an outcome that’s best to students, and really try to work that out. If there’s a systemic problem, will address in a way that doesn’t involve the student at all; in some cases, may be a conversation with the Dean. Conduct reviews of programs, so makes sure to keep track who’s being reviewed at certain times to see if certain behavior surfaces.

MICHAEL: This year will be the 5th year of the annual program review. This will be the first time we’ll see if any progress has been made. Will share information that has been allowed to become public.

ETHAN: Darlene mentioned she publicizes information to the Dean. Thinks that data would be valuable to grad students who want to work on certain causes. We see areas we want to improve. To have Rackham as a teammate exposing what Rackham’s recommendations has been suggested so we can work together. Wants a public way of having these issues disclosed.
DARLENE: How would we share the information?
ETHAN: When people come to you asking services, do they share how they found out? A lot of people don’t know what to do or where to go.
DARLENE: Mostly it’s been through word of mouth, talking to friends who have used the services from the office. Has been better in sharing what the resources are at Rackham and within the department. Most students are reluctant to start in their department, so my office is a neutral place.

JOSH: Would like Darlene to be part of our Town Halls so students know about the services from her office.

MINDY: What is the difference between Darlene’s office and the Ombudsman?
DARLENE: Ombudsman is a neutral party with no authority to impose policies while Darlene can uphold policies. He can go in, ascertain whether a program has adhered to policy or not and make recommendations to make systemic changes; they won’t advocate on students or programs, just to try to get to the truth and try to fix what’s wrong with an issue. I work closely with the Ombudsman; we refer students to each other. His office has no authority to impose policies.

DARLENE: In regards to the health insurance premium, is the RSG Board discussing this at a meeting?
MICHAEL: We’ll be discussing this in about 2 weeks.
V. ETHAN'S GSRA UPDATE

ETHAN:
GEO’s website has a form that you can fill out so they can come to your department for an informational meeting. They came to my department and talked for an hour, and at the end, my sense is that there are problems that need to be addressed, but rather than addressing problems directly they need to unionize because that’s their mechanism to try to solve the problem.

MICHAEL: What was overall sentiment after the meeting?
ETHAN: Basically, 3 sorts of issues that they’re bringing up.

MINDY: Tien and I went to a talk of GEO. They said there’s no policy in place for students to address issues, but I didn’t know Darlene’s office existed.

MICHAEL: I’ve attended a meeting and provided my opinion as a student. Students asked different questions, but answers received were vague. GEO were unwilling to provide some responses or unwilling to track those who have complained about GEO’s processes. We as a body are neutral until we pass a resolution stating otherwise, but it’s important to educate the student body as well we can. An email will be sent out after the Break. If Ethan wants to draft an email, please feel free to.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a) ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

TIEN:
March 7, 1st Town Hall, Div I. Med Sci I, 5330. 6pm-8pm.

MICHAEL:
Please draft an email to send to the student body.

Expectation of the Board is for each Board member to go to the town hall of your corresponding division. Food will be provided. Academic Affairs Co-Chairs are organizing, so let them know if you can’t go and that’s your division. The Representatives in attendance at each of these will be introduced.

JOSH: Can at least one member of Exec be at all?
MICHAEL: Yes!

MICHAEL:
Hopes to have people planted in the audience to ask questions and get the ball rolling.

JOSH:
Each town hall will take place at a building in its corresponding Division. Will have moderated Q&A. Open to the idea of moderators.

DARLENE: March 10th, 12pm, lunch provided. Forum for doctoral students, open to any doctoral students. Encourages us to attend. Has sent an email to grad coordinators. Will email it to
Michael to forward to doctoral students. Asking for questions in advance to make sure there will be answers at the meeting.

b) COMMUNICATIONS

MAYELA:
A newsletter will be emailed out soon. Please contribute!

MICHAEL
Yay! Newsletter! Oodles of information for next time.

c) BUDGET

[Enter guest Dorothy Pirtle.]

MINDY:
There’s a funding request from the Students of Color of Rackham (SCOR) for $1,000. Dorothy Pirtle will be speaking on their behalf. The funding request is for a Conference that will be open to the student body.

DOROTHY:
I am here to request $1,000 in funding for the upcoming SCOR Conference. Will be open to grad students and undergrads. Total budget of $8,000. The $1,000 request from RSG will help with the rest of the requested funding. RSG requests $500 for the facility rental and $500 for honorarium. Partners are: School of Social Work, School of Public Policy, Center for African American Studies, Center for Women, etc. Has collaborated to help come to $10,000 goal. Speaker comes from University of Illinois-Chicago, a faculty member in the sociology department; will discuss universal topics anyone can relate to. Will be talking about tenure, which applies to doctoral students, but also professional development, work-life balance. Her keynote address encompasses several concepts for all students. It’s also incorporating Masters candidates in one of the presentations of the Conference.

MICHAEL: Is the location the assembly hall in this building?
DOROTHY: Yes

MICHAEL: How long has the program been going on for, and past attendance?
DOROTHY: Organization was rejuvenated in 1994 and has been highs and lows. Is not sure about the most accurate numbers of membership. So far, 85 students signed up to the conference, but doesn’t know about past conference attendance.

ETHAN: How to register for the conference?
DOROTHY: There’s a website, and the SCOR Facebook page which has a link to registration. Email blast for SCOR email listserve.

MICHAEL: I did receive an invitation from SCOR, which will be emailed to the Board.

JOSH: If adding $1,000, will fall a bit short of what’s on the form. So where is $300 going?
DOROTHY: Discrepancy is how much has to be paid for facility management, in terms of incidentals, of coming to facility to clean up. The extra $500 anticipating from MSA is to meet the $300 gap for incidentals, just to be safe.

7
LILY: Of the students registered so far, what fraction are undergrad vs grad students?
DOROTHY: Not sure if registration of students include undergrad, but may be able to get info.

JOSH: If you have part of the money left over, how will that work?
MICHAEL: RSG, if you’d like, can potentially co-sponsor the event to get the room for free.
DOROTHY: Will have to discuss with SCOR E-Board, but sounds great.

[Dorothy leaves the room while the Board deliberates.]

MINDY: Technically, the Budget Committee hasn’t had a chance to review and discuss.
JOSH: Think we should fund $700 (since if they co-sponsor, they’ll be saving $300).
DAVID: Concerned about the amount of money spent per person.
ETHAN: Would like RSG to help promote event through our email listserve, to help them with their 150 student target.
MAYELA: Second Josh.
MICHAEL: Given scope of event, want to validate we can actually get room for free.
JOSH: Can’t we reimburse them after the fact? Just give them $700 now, and then the remaining $300.

Josh motions to support SCOR’s funding request for $700 provided that they choose to co-sponsor with RSG to get the room for free, or $1,000 if RSG cannot provide the free room. If they choose not to co-sponsor, then only $700 will be allocated to them. Ethan seconds the motion.

AYES: 10
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 3
Motion passed.

d) ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

MINDY:
We interviewed Elections Director yesterday. We interviewed 4 candidates – all were fantastic candidates. The candidate chosen by the Committee is Dorothy Pirtle – she’s very friendly, eloquent, and has done this before.

[Dorothy enters.]

MICHAEL: The Elections Committee has nonominated you for Elections Director. Any questions?
DOROTHY: No questions.

Josh motioned to hire Dorothy Pirtle as Elections Director. Lily seconds the motion.

AYES: 11
NOES: 1
ABSTAIN: 1
Motion passes. Congratulations, Dorothy!

MICHAEL:
Elections are March 22\textsuperscript{nd} 23\textsuperscript{rd}. We look forward to working with you!
VII. GRAD STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS:

MICHAEL:
Please review the Graduate Student Bill of Rights in your agenda packet; this is Berkeley’s version, which we can modify and adopt. Many of these points exist, but we want to turn it into a policy.

VIII. ADJOURN

The Rackham Student Government General Board Meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Meeting minutes prepared by: Mayela Montenegro, Vice President