I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Rackham Student Government General Board Meeting was held on Wednesday, February 9, 2011, at 7:15 p.m. at the Rackham Graduate Building.

RSG President Michael Benson called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m.

Members Present: Michael Benson, Mayela Montenegro, Mindy Waite, Tien-Huei Hsu, Phil Esposito, Yu Zhang, Alex Emly, Katherine Fisher, Rahul Sakhamuri, Robert Nyambati, Eli Eisman, James Mulligan, Alex Toulouse, Josh Bow, Ethan Eagle, Lily Mancour, and Kristy Figel

Guest: Dr. Adam Cole, former RSG President

II. OFFICER REPORTS

a. PRESIDENT

MICHAEL:

Today’s guest, Dr. Adam Cole, former RSG President, has come to speak about SAGE and our federal lobbying efforts.

The RSG website is currently being updated. We need to update the pictures of RSG board members, so you can either take a picture right after the meeting or email a picture to Michael.

As you know, there was no RSG meeting last week due to severe weather conditions. In the agenda packets please find some committee meeting minutes which we’ll be approving today.

Per RSG Bylaws, when an RSG Representative has accumulated 3 unexcused absences, he/she can be removed from the Board. Such is the case with Chen Li, Division II Rep, who has missed the meetings on January 19, January 26, and today. She will be notified and will be given an opportunity to explain why she should keep her seat on the board. If she doesn’t provide an explanation, the RSG Board will vote to remove her. If she is removed, her Division II seat will be open. If you know of anyone who is interested in being on the Board, keep this in mind.

b. VICE PRESIDENT

MAYELA:

No report.

c. TREASURER

MINDY:

The current RSG budget is $23,102.57.

MICHAEL:
We were overcharged for a rental, but are working towards correcting that problem with Rackham.

III. RSG LOGISTICS

a. SOCIAL GATHERING UPDATE

MICHAEL:
As you may have seen from Kristy’s email, tomorrow’s Social Gathering has been postponed. If you have any ideas for the gathering, please let Kristy, Mayela, or Mindy know.

b. WINTER 2011 BUDGET (includes Spring/Summer 2011)

MINDY:
Thanks to those who have submitted a budget. Student Life Committee did not submit a budget, so $6,000 was just allocated to them – Lily approved the suggestion.

Proposed budget:
BEGINNING BALANCE: $23,102
Legislative Committee: $3,000
Academic Affairs Committee: $900
Budget Committee: $6,000
Student Life Committee: $6,000
Elections Committee: $500
General (food, printing): $2,750
Reserve Cash: $3,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES: $22,150
Remaining Balance: $952

ETHAN: Requested the status of the student fee increase that was approved by the students last semester.

MICHAEL: The student fee increase is moving forward. It has been, and is currently, $1.50/student/term. Last semester, the student body voted to raise the fee to $2/student/term.

Mayela motioned to amend the Elections Committee budget to include a potential bonus of $200 for the Elections Director. Thus, the new Elections Committee budget will be $700 ($200 for the Committee + $300 for the Elections Director salary + $200 for a possible bonus for the Elections Director). The $200 increase to the Elections Committee budget will be taken from the remaining balance.

Mindy seconded the motion.
AYES: 17
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 0
Motion passed. Elections Committee budget will be increased to $700.

Amended proposed budget:
BEGINNING BALANCE: $23,102
Legislative Committee: $3,000
Academic Affairs Committee: $900
Budget Committee: $6,000
Student Life Committee: $6,000
Elections Committee: $700
General (food, printing): $2,750
Reserve Cash: $3,000
Mindy motioned to approve the Winter 2011 (including Spring/Summer 2011) RSG Budget. Josh seconded the motion.
AYES: 17
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 0
Motion passed. Budget is approved.

c. REPRESENTATIVE AND EXECUTIVE OFFICE HOURS

MICHAEL:
Thanks to Alex E., Lily, Tien-Huei, and Mindy for submitting your office hours. Everyone else, please email Exec your office hours for the semester! Reminder: Minimum office hours are to be held at least once every 2 weeks, for 30 minutes each time.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

JOSH:
A committee meeting was held. Talked about having town hall meetings, developing strategies on how to get students to attend and how to address the issues the Committee wants to cover. Have ideas on throwing an event and working in collaboration with Student Affairs Committee.

A group has been formed to create a press release on the GEO/GSRA process to show students how this process affects them.

Will meet with a director from the library to discuss reserving a library study space for Masters and other graduate students.

Has invited Rackham Dean Weiss to attend an RSG meeting, to discuss transparency and review of departments. Wants to also discuss the idea of establishing a university-wide policy to get a Masters degree after 2 years of study and after finishing a certain amount of coursework, for those PhD students to whom this option is not currently available.

The next committee meeting will be February 23rd. Meetings will be bi-weekly, some before and others after the RSG Board meeting.

b. BUDGETARY COMMITTEE

MINDY:
The Committee has received 3 applications from student organizations requesting funding. The Committee met yesterday to discuss some of these funding requests and discuss the current RSG funding policy.

The requests are:
- Political Scientists of Color – Budget Committee will briefly meet tonight to discuss this funding request since the organizations just provided some answers the committee members had
- Students Engaged in Global Health – Student org will be coming to our next RSG meeting to present their request since their request is over $700 and thus needs to be presented to the RSG Board. The Board will have an opportunity to ask questions.
- SPICMACAY at UM – they’ve been approved for the amount of $650. Phil has posted this event to the RSG Google Calendar.

Josh motioned to accept the Budget Committee Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2011. Mindy seconded the motion.
AYES: 14
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 0
Motion passed. The minutes have been accepted by the Board. The Budget Committee will vote to approve the minutes at their next meeting.

c. COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

MAYELA:
Will send out an email to the Committee to discuss plans.

d. ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

MINDY:
For the Elections Director position, 1 application has been received and 1 inquiry has been received. A reminder email will be sent out to the student body for the ED position.

e. LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MICHAEL:
A meeting will take place tonight after the meeting. If anyone is interested in state and federal lobbying, please stick around. If you’re interested in going to DC to lobby, please let us know.

f. STUDENT LIFE:

RAHUL:
Committee met on January 27th and came up with a comprehensive plan on activities for the semester. Student Life events will be organized in three areas: RSG/Rackham events; RSG special events; and RSG periodic events.

RSG periodic events will consist of 2 bar nights per month, taking place on the 2nd Tuesday and 4th Saturday of every month.

Other planned events:
- Feb 15, Valentine’s Day stoplight party
- Feb 23, Game Night at Pinball Pete’s
- Alex T. wants to do Saava’s Salsa Night
- Amit wants to do March Madness
- March 16 or 19 – Movie Night
- Need to figure something out for St. Patrick’s Day

Discussed issues for international students, GSRA, RSG branding (wants to also incorporate also non-RSG Reps), T-shirt contest (have students buy directly from vendor), and add social events to website.
LILY:
Thanks to those who have volunteered in the last few RSG/Rackham events.

Next big event is Friday for the Pistons game.

RAHUL:
Next committee meeting is tomorrow, 7pm @ Grizzly Peak.

MICHAEL:
Proposed an amendment to the Committee’s meeting minutes to include Mayela for the meeting regarding RSG branding.

Ethan moved to accept the Student Life Committee’s meeting minutes – January 27, 2011. Josh seconded the motion.
AYES: 14
NOES: 0
ABSTAIN: 0
Meeting minutes were accepted. They will be approved at tomorrow’s Committee meeting.

g. I ALREADY GRADUATED DAY

CHAIR Cherisse Loucks was not present.

LILY:
Knows that a date still has not been set.

MICHAEL:
A meeting will be organized with Cherisse, Student Life Committee Chairs, and Exec to discuss the future of the event.

h. LEGISLATIVE

MICHAEL:
A Legislative Committee meeting will take place tonight immediately after the Board Meeting.

V. INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

MICHAEL:
Please send Exec an update on your individual projects.

VI. SAGE (Student Advocates for Graduate Education) COALITION

MICHAEL:
RSG was integral in the founding of the SAGE Coalition. Adam Cole was RSG Vice President at the time it was formed. SAGE is RSG’s federal lobbying arm.

GUEST SPEAKER: DR. ADAM COLE
Was President of RSG last year. A 1st day PhD from Pharmacy. It’s great to see the entire room filled. Michael convinced him to come out of retirement to work with Legislative Committee.

SAGE was started by University of Texas, Austin when he sent an email asking some students to come to the campus to discuss a SAGE-like org, for first-tier research universities. Formed coalition called SAGE with
purpose to help each other out with local issues. Also did the lobbying arm in which the group has had the most success. Has had 2 Day on the Hill event in which we go in April for a weekend to lobby on particular issues. At back of packets, you'll find White Papers from last year's lobbying issues. Last year, we had immigration reform (H1B and F1 visas; student indebtedness; taxation on fellowships). Issues are decided during the Fall Summit and shaped throughout the year before DC.

Use our diverse student population to advocate for issues from different angles. Each school takes responsibility to research particular topics and come up with comprehensive summaries for the group. There's a conference call and email group in which all SAGE members are involved in. UM has a Washington, DC office and we're in contact with Cindy Banks who's 2nd in command as UM's federal lobbyist. Cindy and the lobbyists from other universities will work together to help us navigate through Congress and make the meetings. Before lobbying, the SAGE group gets together to polish up issues and get to know each other. On one day, you're placed in heterogenous groups with students from other schools to relay the message that these issues are national, not just specific to a state or school. On second day of lobbying, it's State Lobbying Day, so UM go to Michigan Congressmembers and discuss issues specific to Michigan.

Group needs to do a better job in educating students of what we do and what the point of this activity is. If anyone is interested, please let us know.

There are 14 universities participating in SAGE. There are universities that have “real” student governments with a more far-reaching role, and other student governments are more informal organizations. When he was part of SAGE, there was some discussion about the danger of having SAGE be too big.

MICHAEL:
Coalition decided to organize a bit differently. Officers were elected. Benson serves as SAGE’s Vice Chair. Example draft of GSRA Bill of Rights came from Berkeley through SAGE, to share best practices with SAGE members.

During Fall Summit, SAGE discussed potential items to lobby for, but still need to be finalized.

MAYELA:
I am the leader of the Affordability & Research category which includes the Roosevelt Scholars Act and America Competes Act.

MICHAEL
Can go online to get more information on the status of the bills. We’re making new White Papers this year which will be shared with the Board before the DC trip. Recommend going to Library of Congress – Thomas Library – website to get information on bills.

Folks coming to Leg Committee, please take one of these and generate a small summary.

ADAM:
Because we have Cindy (Michigan’s federal lobbyist) in D.C. and she’s participated actively with SAGE, we have a strong position with the coalition. There’s a need for newer blood. So to maintain our strong presence in the coalition we need new blood to continue the effort for UM.

If you’re afraid of doing this because you have no clue of lobbying, you’ll learn. Adam had no clue what to expect; there’s no reason for you to not do this.
MICHAEL:
Actual lobby days are Tues and Wed, but we'll be arriving on Sat to give history of SAGE, teambuilding activities, dividing into heterogenous groups. On Sun and Mon, lobbying training leading training sessions with federal liaisons to train students on how to lobby. Has a number of applications from several of the board – thanks for expressing interest. UM will probably be sending up to 10 people, but confirmed group will be presented to the Board until funding gets approved.

ADAM:
You have to follow through with it, can't push it aside. If you're going to go, you have to be active in the effort. You're representing RSG and UM.

MICHAEL:
A State Day is being planned with Rackham.

VII. OPEN DISCUSSION

KRISTY:
The RSG Social Gathering will be re-scheduled. A WhenItsGood.com poll will be sent to see when RSG members are available.

VIII. ADJOURN

The Rackham Student Government General Board Meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

*Meeting minutes prepared by: Mayela Montenegro, Vice President*