SRACKHAM STUDENT GOVERNMENT
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
5/29/2013, 7:00 PM
ESPRESSO ROYALE ON STATE ST.

I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:08pm

II. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Members: Chris Tom, Michael Benson, Phil Saccone, Janakiraman Balachandran, Alex Gutierrez, Kaitlin Flynn, Brooke Horton, Ryan Robertson

Present: Chris Tom, Michael Benson, Phil Saccone, Janakiraman Balachandran, Alex Gutierrez, Kaitlin Flynn, Brooke Horton, Ryan Robertson

Excused:

Unexcused:

III. OUTSTANDING ACTION ITEMS

a. [Michael] Email Phil about Assistant Registrar contact information
b. [Phil] Email to someone about why course evaluation information is private
c. [Chris] Write to SACUA’s AAC and set up meeting (see appendix)
d. [Chris] Help edit Ram’s Resolution
e. [Phil] Set up meeting with Janet re: Bill of Rights and other Resolutions
f. [Michael] Get list (updated?) for SACUA committees that would like a graduate student on them

IV. ACTION ITEM UPDATES

V. OPEN DISCUSSION

VI. ADJOURNMENT:

VII. APPENDIX

a. Email to SACUA AAAC (Academic Affairs Advisory Committee):
   Greetings!

   My name is Chris Tom, and I am the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of Rackham Student Government. I am reaching out to a number of academic committees of the representative governments at the University of Michigan to touch base. Though our groups serve different constituencies, the academic branches of our governments have the common goal of
improving the academic environment and research quality within the University. We believe that there are best practices that we each have that would benefit the other. Furthermore, there are initiatives that we are working on that we would like to collaborate and receive feedback for (and would be happy to give to you), strengthening our stance and reach across the University.

For instance:

- We recently passed a Board Resolution to instate a 1-month waiting period in which students would be unable to see their grades until they filled out the appropriate course evaluations. Upon filling these out, they would immediately be able to receive their grades. It is our hope that this will drastically increase participation and statistical significance of the course evaluation process. Since this feedback is a critical part of faculty tenure decisions as well as training for your junior colleagues, this will benefit both graduate students and faculty.

- We have been working on a Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. Though we have been working with Rackham to figure out how to implement this, we feel faculty feedback would be important to consider.

- As part of the GSBoR, we are laying the groundwork for a Conflict Resolution Board. There have been a number of instances in the past couple of years of the conflict resolution process going awry, and we would like to create a Board composed of faculty and students that can help to mediate future conflicts and reach a place of concord. Because this would largely mediate conflict between faculty and students, we would want to include your input on any design and function we had in mind.

I hope that this is the first of many communications between our committees and governments. Please let me know if you have any questions, and if you would be willing to set up an informal meeting at some point so that we can make introductions.

Be well,
Chris Tom
PhD Candidate, Program in Chemical Biology
Chair, Academic Affairs Committee
Representative, Rackham Student Government
Resolution to make evaluations ‘semi-mandatory’

Whereas evaluations at the University of Michigan for Graduate Student Instructors (GSI) and faculty are completely voluntary on the students part, and

Whereas evaluation completion rate for paper evaluations used to be >90%\(^1\), and

Whereas the current digital system has around a 30% completion rate\(^2\). and

Whereas teaching evaluations for GSIs are a training tool for junior colleagues,\(^3\) and

Whereas teaching evaluations for professors plays a significant role in professional advancement within the University,\(^4\) and

Whereas a smaller sample size becomes less relevant for professional advancement and less useful as a training tool.

Whereas a system of mandatory evaluations would benefit both GSI, junior faculty, and the University as a whole, therefore

Be it resolved that a student who has not filled out the relevant evaluations for a class shall not be able to see their grades for said class within a period of not less than one (1) month from the end of the semester.

Be it resolved that immediately upon completion of the relevant evaluations, a student shall be able to see their grades.

Be it resolved that the President of the Rackham Student Body in conjunction with the RSG Academic Affairs Committee shall work with the Office of the Registrar to set these changes in place.

\(^1\) In order to become a better teacher, and prepare for future leadership roles
\(^2\) including tenure and salary adjustments,
Resolution to create a class-bank system

Whereas classes are a critical, mandatory component of the majority of graduate student education at the University, and

Whereas some upper-level classes are offered once every two or three years

Whereas these classes may prove to be advantageous for advancement

Whereas the current Rackham system for PhD candidates only allows for a single class to be taken free of charge per semester

Whereas a second class can be taken for a substantial fee to the student or the advisor

Whereas fellowships and training grants often require additional classes to be taken; these classes can negate the cost-benefits of candidacy and other training grants, therefore,

Be it resolved to convert the current Rackham system to a class-bank system in which graduate students are allowed (with their advisors permission) to take as many classes as desired, up until the class bank is depleted is met, at which point students are permitted to enroll or audit in one class per semester.

Be it resolved that this bank shall contain X classes/credits

Be it resolved that the President of the Rackham Student Government on behalf of the Rackham Student Body is instructed to work with the Office of the Registrar and Rackham Graduate School to implement these suggestions.
RESOLUTION TO EXPAND THE UNIVERSITY NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

WHEREAS, The Non-Discrimination Policy within the University of Michigan Standard Practice Guide exists to protect the diverse range of individuals employed by and attending the University from discrimination, harassment, and violence; AND

WHEREAS, the Non-Discrimination Policy states that the University “will not discriminate against any individual because of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status”; AND

WHEREAS, “gender identity” is interpreted to refer to the self-identity of the individual; “gender expression” is interpreted to the actions of an individual to realize their gender identity; AND

WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association defines sexual orientation to be “an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes”; AND

WHEREAS, sexual orientation refers to the nature of the person or persons that an individual is emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions; AND

WHEREAS, University protects the subject and the object of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions through its Non-Discrimination Policy; AND

WHEREAS, the Non-Discrimination Policy does not protect the actions between the subject and object that are the primary means to sexual and physical fulfillment; AND

WHEREAS, “sexual expression” would thus refer to the actions of an individual to realize their sexual identity; AND

WHEREAS, “marital status” is defined as “never married, married, widowed

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5 Michigan Standard Practice Guide (sect. 201.35)
6 Jackie Simpson, Head of the Spectrum Center, adapted from personal communication on Feb 13th, 2012.
7 Dr. Charlie Glickman, Adult Sex Educator in San Francisco, adapted from personal communication March 31st, 2012.
and not remarried, divorced and not remarried, married but legally separated, de facto union”; AND

WHEREAS, “marital status” does not protect a diverse range of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual relationships that can occur outside of, and coexist with, the institution of marriage; AND

WHEREAS, it is known that individuals can and have been discriminated against for their methods of sexual expression and non-marital relationship status; AND

WHEREAS, without explicit protection from discrimination, there may be the threat of implicitly sanctioned discrimination; violence and related hate crimes can accompany the lack of explicit protection.

NOW ON BEHALF OF THE STUDENT BODY OF THE HORACE H. RACKHAM GRADUATE SCHOOL, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the section 201.35 of the Standard Practice Guide of the University of Michigan be amended as follows (without emphasis):

“The University, in its employment and human resource policy and practices, will not discriminate against any individual because of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, relationship status, sex, sexual orientation, sexual expression, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status, except as allowed by the need for bona fide occupational qualification. Reasonable accommodation will also be provided to persons with disabilities, to disabled veterans, and to accommodate religious practices.” AND BE IT FINALLY

RESOLVED, that the President of the graduate student body is empowered and directed to work with the Administration of the University of Michigan to put into place policies that reflect the will and intent of this resolution.

AUTHOR

Christopher Tuck Mung Baker Tom
Representative (Division 1), Rackham Student Government
Co-chair, Academic Affairs Committee


10 National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, Incident Response Report records

11 Rebecca Stotzer, PhD. Comparison of hate crime rates across protected and unprotected groups. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. June 2007.
ATTEST
By Signing below, I certify the this resolution was dispatched by the RSG Board under the rules as prescribed in section IX of the bylaws and that the vote count appearing at the top of this resolution is accurate.

____________________________________
Kaitlin Flynn
Vice President, Rackham Student Government

PRESIDENTIAL ACTION
I, Michael Benson, President of the Rackham Student Body, do hereby approve / veto this resolution on this the _______ day of _____, 2012.

____________________________________
Michael L. Benson
President, Rackham Graduate Student Body