Rackham Student Government
Board Meeting: April 15, 2015

Agenda

I. Call To Order
II. Approval of Agenda
III. Guest: Katy Holland, PhD Candidate, Psychology re: sexual assault survey
IV. Approval of Previous Minutes
   a. April 8, 2015
V. Officer Reports
   a. Graduate Student Body President, Phil
   b. Graduate Student Body Vice President, Chuky
   c. Graduate Student Body Treasurer, Abneris
VI. Committee Reports
   a. Academic Affairs
   b. Budgetary
   c. Elections
   d. Legislative Affairs
      i. SAGE recap
   e. Student Life
      i. Publication event
VII. Summer planning
VIII. Open Discussion
IX. Adjourn

Included in packet:
RSG Board Minutes April 8, 2015 (p. 2)
Campus Climate Survey Letter to the Administration (p. 7)
BC Minutes (p. 10)
Final SAGE White Paper 2015 (p. 11)
RACKHAM STUDENT GOVERNMENT
BOARD MEETING
April 8, 2015
RACKHAM GRADUATE BUILDING
2ND FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM, NORTH ALCOVE
6:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER: 6:16pm
   a. Present: Representatives Matt G, Nate H, Katie F, Buke H, Kyle L, David B, Michael B, President Saccone, Vice President Mbagwu, Treasurer Rodriguez
   b. Absent: Chris Tom
   c. Excused: David M., Brandon

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
    Motion to approve by Abneris, seconded by Kyle. Approved unanimously.

III. Guest Darlene Ray Johnson (Resolutions Officer): Discussion on students with disabilities
    Round of introductions.

Darlene: In 2012, GEO negotiated for a central office for graduate students with disabilities. Rackham was designated as that space, and I have jurisdiction over that piece. I’m interested not only in employment accommodations but also climate, etc. A big agenda item right now is about accessibility and mobility for disabled students around campus. Students with mobility impairments that participate in orientation must notify the University ahead of time, and then they are given a different route from the tour. Leaves a feeling of being singled out, etc. Much of the discussion at this meeting was focused on undergraduates. One of the ideas that came out of it was a type of “concierge” type role where one person helps the student navigate campus over the course of their time at UM. Another concern is that not all students disclose their non-apparent disabilities, etc. I want to hear from you as to whether students, peers with disabilities feel represented and welcome and equally mobile around campus. We want the graduate student voice in the planning process for improving the experience of students with disabilities on campus.

Phil: We are actually in the process of putting together a graduate student body wide survey where some of the questions tackle these topics. We will have that sometime by the end of the year.

Abneris: I have spoken with a number of students with disabilities, and one source says that it could be up to 30% of Rackham students living with disabilities. Considering a campaign for the empowerment of students with disabilities through video and social
media. There is also a student group (in individual programs) that discusses some of these issues (but not specifically for grad students). I can put you in contact with them.

Michael: Focusing on mobility and accessibility is important, but there are other disabilities that affect graduate students more broadly. The numbers of accommodations for students with disabilities around campus are very lacking. I would encourage you to look at the number of applicants (to the university) that have or claim disabilities.

Phil: It’s true that there is a discrepancy between the number of students with disabilities than those who file (with some entity [SSD]) about there disability. But even in that number, not all of those issues are addressed, or are more hidden, and students end up simply dealing or compromising with day-to-day issues (such as more time for exams, or special accommodations for classes, etc).

Darlene: Some students may not be aware of the services where they file their disability, and sometimes this hesitancy to claim their disability has to do with fear of their perception.

Kyle: I echo the comments mentioned before. SSD (services) is good, but very much course oriented. When it comes to things like quals and prelim exams, things are much more subjective. For example, 2 years “should” be enough time to take and finish the qualifying exams, barring any special needs. I think that faculty can be and have been supportive verbally about accommodations for many types of disabilities. However, this sometimes fades when it comes to actionable items.

Phil: Some of this might also have to do with bystander mentality. People sometimes just don’t want to get involved even if they see some unfairness or lack of accommodations.

Michael: Rackham could possibly create a program, where if there is a student with a disability, the stringent requirements of his program be revised and left up to perhaps a committee in the program, etc. I’d also like to note that there is no flexibility for faculty either, given a journal deadline, grants, etc. and they do not receive accommodations for any potential disabilities. It’s a culture shift that may need to be addressed, but is likely also a factor in their accommodations of their students’ disabilities.

Phil: Once we get the survey back and speak to other groups, I think we will also be made aware of other non-obvious issues. I would expect much of it would fall under the advisor/mentee umbrella. There is also likely a good chunk that will fall under mental health as well. It’s important that we find the right ways for Rackham to insert itself and look out for students in this (and any) situation.

Darlene: I also cognizant of what’s going on in the programs, but I am also concerned about the general services and mobility around campus, para-transit, etc. For example, the late night bus services range of operation, etc.
Katie: I’m wondering if they could focus on clearing the ADA ramps, to buildings and facilities before clearing stairs. It could really make a difference for students.

Darlene: I also want to discuss how to improve awareness about the services (SSD). We are thinking about adding a sentence or section about SSD in the admissions letter.

Katie: In my orientation, we had CAPS come and speak to us. So those settings would be a good place to give out information.

Matt: We want to make sure that we have that in the survey, perhaps ask if students have a disability.

Michael: We need to be important with what we ask in the survey, phrasing is important.

Buke: I think the orientation method would be better than a direct question asking in the survey.

Katie: I’m wondering if for Rackham and/or RSG events, if we can make a small gesture by putting a symbol for “ADA accessible,” etc.

Phil: I think that would be a good idea, and can let us show a little bit of solidarity as well.

Abneris: I agree that the discussion is heavily focused around undergraduates, and that experience is very different for graduate students. I think one of the important things that Rackham can do is simply provide a space for students with disabilities to meet and create solutions for their own campus issues. We can discuss all we want here, but without disabilities of our own (known and unknown) we can only do so much.

Katie: There is a university committee that deals with graduate student disabilities already, so instead of starting from scratch it would be a good idea to start there and have more grad representation on the committee.

Kyle: Going back to services, I think there are sometimes too many and no clear direction of which services to use and when. It would be nice to have point people to help navigate inquirers in the right direction.

Darlene: Please contact me with any other information you wish to pass along; this was very helpful!

IV. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES
Motion to approve by Michael, seconded by Buke. Approved unanimously.

V. OFFICER REPORTS
   a. President Phillip Saccone
This is our penultimate meeting, and next week will be my last meeting as President.

Buke, you’ve been great elections director!

SAGE in my view was lots of work, but a huge success. The final versions of the white paper are in the packet, I encourage you to look through them. I also want to focus on our congressional newsletter and use the white papers as a template.

b. **Vice President Chuky Mbagwu**
   We are in dire need of a newsletter. There will be one last one for the term involving quite a few items.

c. **Treasurer**

VI. **Certification of RSG Winter 2015 election results**
   Phil: There have been no reports of election fraud (haha), so I will turn it over to Buke.

   Motion to approve/certify the results of the winter 2015 elections by Buke, seconded by Michael (w explanation of the results). Roll call vote:

   - Nate: Yes
   - Katie: Yes
   - Buke: Yes
   - Kyle: Abstain
   - David: Yes
   - Chuky: Yes
   - Michael: Yes
   - Abneris: Yes

VII. **Michigan Campus Climate Survey**
   Phil: This is coming from the AAU survey. Let’s include it in a Gazette as well as an individual email. Perhaps incentivize it.

VIII. **Philanthropy Grants**
   Phil: Please take a look at the student philanthropy info included in the packet. Due date is April 20th. If someone wants to take a lead on this and bring ideas for the grant, feel free to put something together and send to me or Chuky.

   Michael: Putting on my advisor role, I don’t think we should do this. We have a pool of money and should leave it to other groups that may need it more. We can include it in the Gazette instead.

IX. **COMMITTEE UPDATES**
a. Academic Affairs Committee

b. Budgetary Committee

   Motion to approve minutes by Abneris, seconded by Michael. Approved unanimously.

   Abneris: We have funded 17 organizations.

c. Elections Committee

d. Legislative Affairs Committee

e. Student Life Committee

   i. Community Outreach & Social Action subcommittee

X. OPEN DISCUSSION
   We will organize an end-of-term banquet.

XI. ADJOURNMENT at 7:10pm.
April XX, 2015

Dear President Schlissel, Provost Pollack, and Vice-President Harper,

As you know, the AAU/Westat is currently conducting a campus climate survey at the University of Michigan, which assesses issues around sexual misconduct (e.g., prevalence, attitudes and beliefs, and awareness, use, and perceptions of resources available for sexual misconduct on and around campus). As graduate students on this campus, and researchers who care deeply about this issue, we are thrilled that this issue is gaining traction at UM and across the nation. However, we believe there are some significant problems with the AAU survey that is currently taking place at our University. We have detailed some of our specific concerns below:

- The survey design team contained few researchers with expertise in survey assessment of sexual misconduct, and as a result, a large group of over fifty scientists who specialize in violence and trauma (many with decades of experience conducting survey research on sexual assault/misconduct) have urged university/college administrators not to participate in the effort until it could be scientifically peer-reviewed (see their letters and related documents here: http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/scientists/names.html).

- When the AAU announced their partnership with Westat, they stated that the survey would be developed based on the White House Task Force survey instrument (https://www.notalone.gov/assets/ovw-climate-survey.pdf) and Rutgers’ recent pilot test of this survey (i.e., #iSPEAK). However, there was no widely available information regarding whether the measures included in the AAU/Westat survey would be measures that have been used in empirical research and have established reliability and validity. There are several existing, and well validated, measures of sexual victimization (e.g., Mary Koss and colleagues’ Sexual Experiences Survey to assess sexual assault, 1985; 2007; Louise Fitzgerald and colleagues’ Sexual Experiences Questionnaire to assess sexual harassment, 1988; 1995). After taking the AAU/Westat survey, we can see that these established, valid, and reliable measures of sexual victimization were not used or were not used in their entirety (thus invalidating their validity and reliability). The lack of transparency about the AAU survey design and implementation is just one of the issues that the scientists/experts raised in their letters to university administrators about this survey effort. Using established, valid, and reliable measures is of utmost importance because problematic measures can lead to problematic data, which can then lead to incomplete, skewed, or biased results (results that may then be used to shape policies, resources, and prevention efforts on our campus).

- This survey violated an important “best practice” that has been established through years of research on sexual assault. Specifically, the words “sexual assault” appeared on every page of the survey. Researchers have found that including labels (e.g., rape, sexual assault) on measures of sexual victimization can suppress disclosure rates (see works by Mary Koss and/or Martin Schwartz,
We found some survey items to be confusing and/or problematic. For example, the campus climate survey at other institutions (e.g., University of Arizona) offered a $500 lottery incentive. Given this, we believe that IRB review and approval would have been important. IRB approval was obtained for the AAU campus climate survey at other institutions (e.g., University of Arizona).

We have confirmed with staff at the UM Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB) office that this survey did not undergo IRB review at UM. This is true despite the fact that: it is being conducted by a research firm, it is sponsored by the University of Michigan, the recruitment email came from the highest ranking individual on our campus (President Mark Schlissel), the survey link was sent to nearly every student on campus, the survey collected personally identifying information, and participants were offered a $500 lottery incentive. Given this, we believe that IRB review and approval would have been important. IRB approval was obtained for the AAU campus climate survey at other institutions (e.g., University of Arizona).

We found some survey items to be confusing and/or problematic. For example, survey participants were not given the opportunity to write-in their answer if they selected the “other” response option for a question. This becomes particularly important for graduate students, because we found that some survey items were not as applicable for graduate students and/or overlooked our unique experiences.

Further, we found some of the sexual assault related items to be confusing as well. For example, some of the wording was inaccessible (e.g., not all students may know what “adjudication” means). Additionally, there were many follow-up questions that were unclear and could possibly become exhausting (and potentially upsetting) for a student who experienced more than one type of sexual victimization. These issues could hinder the survey from gathering a clear picture of sexual victimization on our campus.

AAU/Westat states that universities will receive a report about their survey results (and results will be used to inform university policies), but it is not clear when or how these data will be made available. For example, will students receive a summary report of findings? Will researchers at our institution have access to these data? Will we be able to compare our institutional data to similar institutions? When the survey was launched, no clear plan was articulated to students about how these data will be analyzed and made available to the university, and whether data will be comparable across campuses. We hoped that students would have been provided more information about how their data would be analyzed and circulated. Research surveys often provide participants with this type of information once they complete the survey (i.e., debriefing).
Despite these concerns, we are glad to be part of an institution that is currently engaged in understanding and speaking out against the issue of sexual violence on campus. Climate surveys are crucial for informing effective policies, resources, and prevention efforts. Indeed, the AAU/Westat Frequently Asked Questions state: “These results will be used to guide policies to encourage a healthy, safe and nondiscriminatory environment at University of Michigan.” However, survey efforts must follow rigorous scientific practices. Problems in the creation and implementation of a survey have the potential to underestimate the prevalence of sexual victimization, harm students who participate, and thereby negatively impact the broader campus community. The White House Task Force climate surveys toolkit states: “If conducted without sufficient planning, a survey can measure nothing, give false results, or even harm campus efforts to address sexual assault.”

We strongly commend the goals of the AAU climate survey (e.g., estimate the prevalence and incidence of sexual misconduct experienced by students, and collect information on students’ attitudes toward sexual misconduct and experiences with university programs and policies), but the issues above leave us with many questions and concerns.

**We would like to request a meeting with you to discuss them further.** In the meeting, we would also like to discuss how UM will receive the AAU survey results, and your plans for using these results and conducting future climate surveys. We plan to send 2-3 student representatives to this meeting, who will speak on behalf of the larger group.

Looking forward to your response,

*Kathryn Holland, Doctoral Candidate in Psychology & Women’s Studies  
*Rita Seabrook, Doctoral Candidate in Psychology & Women’s Studies  
Lauren Reed, Doctoral Candidate in Psychology & Social Work  
Soraya Giaccardi, Doctoral Candidate in Psychology  
Veronica Rabelo, Doctoral Candidate in Psychology & Women’s Studies  
Courtney McCluney, Doctoral Candidate in Psychology  
Kevin Goodman, Doctoral Candidate in Psychology & Women’s Studies  
Emily Vargas, Doctoral Student in Psychology

* = student representative
I. Call to order 5:16pm
   A. Present: Katherine Forsythe, Nathan Harada, David Barton, President Saccone
      Treasurer Rodriguez,
   B. Absent:
   C. Excused: David Malewski, Vice president Mbagwu, President Emeritus Benson

II. DPC
   Second time that we’re seeing this application after the group consulted with Abneris. Nate asks
   about number of graduate students. Phil says that in the past it has been well attended by
   graduate students.

   Katie Moves to fund $500, seconded by Phil.
   Votes: Phil, Katie, David B, Nate, Abneris – Yea
   Nea-0
   Abstain 0

III. Gradtones
   Abneris mentioned that we funded them in the past. Nate asks how well the previous one was
   attended.

   Postponed until Abneris finds out about budget will continue deliberations on line.

   Adjourn: 5:24p
March 21-25, 2015

WWW.SAGECOALITION.ORG
EBOARD@SAGECOALITION.ORG
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SAGE Federal Legislative Priorities

Student Debt and Taxation

The outstanding student loan balance—$1 trillion according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—surpasses credit card debt. 69.6% of graduate students hold student loans with an average cumulative debt of $47,503. The reduction in many student aid programs in addition to the increase in the cost of education is making the financial burden of an advanced education overwhelming.

Key tax code reform will improve the quality of life for graduate students, as well as increase their ability to repay their educational loans. Currently, confusing and contradictory policies unduly burden graduate students, who frequently come to their graduate programs saddled with the additional debt of their undergraduate education.

SAGE Recommends:
IBR Reform:
- Amend the new IBR rules to apply to all outstanding federal student loans.
- Make IBR installments regionally sensitive to cost of living.

Tax Reform
- Consolidate the AOTC, Hope Credit, and tuition reduction, but not the LLC
- Retain section 117(d) which excludes tuition waivers from the overall tax burden;
- Continue FICA withholding exemption for qualified students

Research Funding

The U.S. economy is dependent on groundbreaking research at leading research universities. If the U.S. is to remain a global leader in innovation and technology development, Congress should maintain or increase federal funding of graduate research, which produces cures to diseases, new technology, and a more powerful workforce.

SAGE Recommends:
- Congress should maintain, if not increase, federal funding of research.

Graduate Student Visa Reform

Domestic universities are global leaders that attract the best and brightest international students in pursuit of graduate and professional degrees. SAGE believes that changes to our visa system should be enacted to lower the barriers to permanent residency and incentivize international graduate students to stay in the United States permanently.

SAGE Recommends:
H-1B Visa Reform:
- Establish a moving cap based on demand for H1-B visas, grant work permits for spouses of visa holders, exempt students earning an MA or PhD in a STEM field in the U.S. from the numerical limits on EB visas.

F-1 Visa Reform
- F-1 visa reforms to include the lifting of work restrictions and authorization of dual intent.
Student Debt & Taxation

Incentivizing Graduate Education to Reduce Student Loan Debt and Boost the Economy

The SAGE coalition represents over 140,000 graduate and professional students at the leading public research universities across the country, and is committed to the affordability of higher education for all graduate students.

The 21st century economy requires a diverse workforce with highly specialized skill sets, which often require graduate-level training and education. Graduate students are the visionaries, job creators, and leaders who provide the foundation and framework for the economic and innovative advantages that the United States maintains across the globe. Approximately 25% of Ph.D. students, and 6% of Masters students, receive waivers for institutional tuition/fees. These waivers should not be taxed as earned income.

S.85, the Repay Act of 2015, would simplify the currently confusing Income-Based Repayment (IBR) programs landscape to make loan repayment more accessible. **SAGE Recommends:**

- Simplifying income-driven repayment programs for all federal direct loans: set students’ annual repayment limit at 10% of borrower’s discretionary income up to $25,000, plus 15% of income greater than or equal to $25,000
- Include provisions for loan forgiveness in cases of extreme economic or physical hardship, in addition to loan forgiveness under the public service employee loan forgiveness program

**SAGE further recommends** supporting the following provisions to help incentivize graduate education and mitigate the deleterious consequences of student loan debt that is hurting economic growth:

- Consolidate the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC), Hope Credit, and tuition reduction, but *not* the Lifetime Learning Credit; support a lifetime dollar cap as opposed to the four-year limit
- Increase the student loan interest deduction and restore federally subsidized loans for graduate and professional students
- Amend the federal bankruptcy code to protect students and allow education loans-or obligation to repay funds received as an educational benefit, scholarship, or stipend discharge-to be discharged
- Streamline the tax code to enhance consistency with tuition fees and waivers received by students during the course of a graduate education: retain section 117(d), which excludes tuition waivers from the overall tax burden; continue FICA withholding exemption for qualified students

Additionally, SAGE supports the consideration of regional sensitivity when calculating IBR repayments.
Increase to Research Funding

Cuts to Research Funding Put America’s Future at Risk

The SAGE coalition represents over 140,000 graduate and professional students at the leading public research universities across the country, and is committed to sustainably funding our nation’s top research institutions.

In order to remain a world leader, the United States economy depends on groundbreaking research conducted at top research institutions. This scholarship, which contributes to the development of innovative technology and its practical application, depends on federal research investment. Thanks to the deferment of sequestration the last two years, the U.S. has been able to largely continue to fund groundbreaking research.

However, if the trend in the lack of emphasis on research continues, the U.S. will lose our global lead in technological innovation. These decisions carry long-term consequences for job development and economic growth throughout the nation, not simply at our universities.

We urge Congress to expand federal investment in basic research, which leads to cures for diseases, new technology, and a more powerful workforce, all which keep the U.S. globally competitive.

Continued improvement for American quality of life is directly and indirectly due to investment in R&D. The United States is currently one of the largest investors in R&D, but federal investment in these programs has remained flat the last few years. Other countries are steadily increasing their investments. While we appreciate that R&D has not been ravaged by spending cuts, the stagnation of investment by the U.S. government inhibits economic growth. Halted growth is harmful to Americans and to the global community.

We must increase our spending in R&D to create jobs and continue to grow our economy.

Furthermore, SAGE explicitly endorses the funding of Social, Behavioral & Economic research at the NSF. We also ask that Congress reinstate and ensure future NSF funding for all types of Political Science research. Advanced degrees in the social sciences and humanities teach students how to think critically and communicate in our increasing interconnected world. This knowledge is utilized in their future jobs, often as professors, executives of nonprofit companies, and careers in a variety of fields. SAGE recommends funding the NSF as a whole entity and allowing the Foundation to determine the best way to allocate the money.

*Numbers given in millions of dollars

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Graduate Student Visa Reform
Allowing Talented International Students to Contribute to the American Workforce

The SAGE coalition represents over 140,000 graduate and professional students at the leading public research universities across the country, and is committed to visa reform that benefits students and the American economy.

Restrictive visa policies limit our ability to retain the level of highly-skilled workers and innovators that a global, high-tech economy demands. SAGE supports visa reform that will keep students who have benefitted from an American education, and often federal funding, in the U.S. job market. Retaining the highly-trained students educated at our universities is paramount to maintaining the world’s most competitive workforce and protecting our investments in education and research and development.

- The profiles of H-1B applicants are particularly attractive: In 2012, 72% were between 25-34 and 47% hold a Masters or Doctorate degree.
- More than 50% of Ph.Ds in many STEM fields are awarded to international students.
- In 2014 the number of H-1B visa applications exceeded the yearly limit of 85,000 in a single week.

Highly-skilled visa reform: Allow talented international students to contribute to the American workforce

The temporary nature of the H-1B visa makes it ideally suited to adjust to market demands, but the caps currently placed on H-1B visas are not tied to the business cycle. The cap should be adjusted to meet market demands, and allow American business to benefit from the highly-skilled, professional workforce trained at U.S. Graduate institutions.

For those graduate and professional students that choose to contribute to the American economy long-term, employment based (EB) visas should be the route of choice. Offering graduates a clear path to residency provides a clear path to knowledge retention and further innovation within the U.S.

SAGE recommends:
Non-immigrant visas:
- Exempt from H1 visa caps ALL students with Master’s degrees or higher awarded from U.S. institutions.
- Pass S.153, the I-squared Act – The I-squared Act would increase the H-1B visa cap according to market demand and protect the work authorization of H-1B visa holder spouses.

Employment-base immigrant visas:
- Eliminate per-country numerical limits for graduates with an advanced degree from U.S. institutions.

F-1 Visa Reform: Remove work restrictions for F-1 visa holders’ spouses

The F-1 Visa is the primary visa foreign full-time students use to access education in the United States. Unfortunately, work restrictions on spouses of F-1 visa holders place an undue burden on graduate students and their families. F2 visa holders are not eligible to work, they cannot apply for a social security number, and they cannot enroll in academic programs. To continue attracting the talented international students in face of rising tuition costs, it is particularly important to allow spouses of international students to hold jobs and help support their families.

The DHS has set a new precedent for granting the spouses of educated professionals work rights by issuing H-1B visa holder spouses (those in the H-4 category) work eligibility in the U.S. affecting over 80,000 families per year. By extending those rights to spouses of F-1 visa holders (those in the F-2 category), we can improve the lives of over 20,000 graduate student families at the foundation of America’s most talented professional workforce.
MISSION—“Dedicated to creating a community of student leaders from the preeminent public research universities in the United States that is committed to bettering their own student bodies and promoting educational access, quality, and opportunity nationally.”