RACKHAM STUDENT GOVERNMENT
BOARD MEETING
November 19, 2014
RACKHAM GRADUATE BUILDING
2ND FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM, NORTH ALCOVE
7:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:16pm
   a. Present: Representatives David Barton, David Malewski, Nathan Harada, David Weinreich, Stefan Turcic, Katie Forsythe, Abneris Rodriguez, Mike Hand, Kyle Lady, Sidney Ellington, Malcom Tariq, Treasurer Michael Benson, President Saccone, Vice President Mbagwu
   b. Absent:
   c. Excused:

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion to approve agenda by David W, seconded by Kyle L. Michael B friendly amendment to include director reports. Approved unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Motion to approve by Abneris R, seconded by Kyle L. Approved unanimously.

IV. Special Guest: Dean Janet Weiss

Phil: Would like to introduce Dean Janet Weiss. She has been the Dean for 9.5 years, and has done a great job ushering things for graduate students (such as continuous enrollment and diversity efforts). She’s been a great friend to RSG and we love having her at the Board. She will be speaking with us over the next 2 days for Lunch with the Deans.

Round table of introductions.

Phil: With that I’d like to turn it over to Dean Weiss.

Dean Weiss: It’s great to have the opportunity to meet with all of you. I’d like to thank you for the role that you play in RSG. It’s a great service to your fellow students as well as to the graduate school and the dean’s office. I know that many of you have heard my speech regarding what Rackham is and what role it plays. Briefly, Rackham is an advocate for graduate students in the university, a partner with faculty and staff in all your programs, oversees the design and funding for grad programs, as well as services. We work hard to ensure you get all the opportunities you need in you grad program. We have lot of initiatives and services for graduate student needs (family and child services,
for example). A lot of my job as dean is working together with faculty and other deans, as well as other services such as the Libraries and UHS, etc. I spend much time raising money to support graduate students, some within the university but mostly outside the university. I aim to obtain resources for the grad students to use. When you graduate, you will also hear from us regarding paying it forward for the future of other graduate students. I am also very active nationally on grad student issues – one of my roles is to help raise the issues of grad education in various advocacy forums on the national scene. When you read about higher ed in media, most of the issues are focused on undergrads (tuition increases, loan debt, sexual assault, etc). Those are all important issues, but I’d like to see the media, legislators, and foundations paying equal attention to graduate student issues. On the last round of budget cuts, funding was cut for graduate students to help subsidize loans/funding for undergraduates. Though important, graduate student funding is just as important. Been extremely happy and collaborative with RSG and SAGE, the student self-advocacy is a key factor in sending the message.

This year, things are going strong. We had 25,000 applications last year, for about 2500 admissions this year. We have reduced the amount of time to finish grad degrees, and a larger number of grad students have been fully funded. We have improved and will continue offering summer support for those who’s programs do not cover spring/summer. I’m open to any questions you may have!

David M: I’m potentially interesting in becoming a dean of a pharmacy school. How much time do you spend on fundraising, and what percentage of your time goes to that?

Weiss: It varies from dean to dean and between universities. It’s a little challenging to navigate who approaches whom for funding and contributions, especially when there are multiple units at play (e.g. pharmacy and rackham). As a result, I spend a lot of time fundraising for Rackham. In addition, I write grant proposals for the graduate school, as well as seek funding from outside sources (Ford, etc). I spend at least 1 day a week on fundraising.

Phil: Turning the attention back to advocacy for grad students – we have sometimes had trouble getting the attention of the higher-ups. We need to find the right way to approach them, and explaining our role as primarily students (among other roles). What do you think the most effective form of “marketing” to those administrators, even Regents, and other decision-making bodies?

Weiss: I think you’ll continue to find that our current president and provost are interested and open to hearing from graduate students. As for the Regents, it’s a little more interesting. The majority of them have not been graduate students (6 of them are professional students from law or medicine). They don’t have a great awareness of what it means to get a research degree from a university. Another reason is the numbers, there are more undergraduates and they are more focused on that. They have also all been undergrads. Being able to make your case to them would be a great advantage to give them an oft-overlooked perspective. I had an opportunity to speak with them regarding
this for the first time in my 10 years here. I think it would be great, even better, to have graduate students speak to the Regents, perhaps at a public comments or forum.

Phil: I’ve found that it may be even easier to talk to them through _____

Mike H: A number of friends and I have been trying to figure out their career trajectory along the way. I’ve seen increasingly that industry has become the more prevalent path. Occasionally some have found it appealing to take a leave of absence to work for some time and then returning to finish their degree. What kind of programs or services exist to help facilitate such a decision?

Weiss: Everyone gets 1 semester off free, regardless. If you include the summer, the time off totals 8 months. If your work experience is related to progress towards your degree, it is much easier and your advisor can approve your decision and have that time count towards your research/degree. If not, the leave does not specifically provide that your program will be exactly where you left off at the time you return. We’ve been tracking the numbers on how many people take these types of leave and why.

Phil: Over the last couple of years, I’ve seen good progress being made in career services within Rackham (spearheaded by Paula Wishard(sp?)). She’s done a great job of identifying students most in need of being briefed on alternative careers. This program is taking off and expanding. Are there any plans for the concerted growth of such programs?

Weiss: There are two ways: One is collaborating with faculty and departments more closely. We are trying hard to ask them (during the program reviews) what are the program needs, what are the needs the students have voiced, etc. We collect information via survey from the students of each program that really impact these reviews and the information we relay back to the faculty/departments. That is a really important complement to the work that we do in our office, as well as the Rackham workshops offered. There are also many other resources for skill-building provided by the Library and other venues.

David W: Last year the University implemented administrative service transfer (AST). In that process, they moved the career and professional department administrator from my department away from our building/program. I’m not sure if it was a mis-classification of her role, or some other error. I think that there needs to be a better focus on that.

Weiss: The program was not intended to affect people working student services such as that, and I believe it must have been an error. I agree with you.

Michael B: Thanks for coming by, I promise I’m graduating soon.

Weiss: You keep saying that… :)
Michael B: Jumping of the example that Mike H had, would there still be tuition made for students doing internships concurrently with their degree?

Weiss: There is tuition, but we also actively raise funding for students doing internships as part of their program.

Phil: We were at a conference where we got the distinct impression that the selection of a graduate program should be directly correlated to its earning potential. As you can imagine, there was a bit of contention over that. Can you comment on that?

Weiss: I think our humanities programs are very strong and beneficial. There is no and hasn’t been any effort or support to change or downsize those programs (humanities and arts) here at the University. A couple things: it is true that the job market for the humanities is not the best, but I can also say the same for many other academic job markets. Universities have gone through a lengthy period of reduced resources, which has significantly affected faculty-hiring decisions. It’s true in the humanities but other programs as well. The reality is that many of our humanities grads are getting jobs outside of the tenure-track – that used to be considered a “failure”, but not so much anymore. There is a larger understanding that successful career tracks exist outside of faculty/tenure track for humanities grads.

Katie: You said that you’d recently been fundraising for humanities programs – how do you and the University balance who does the fundraising at any point in time (whether is the school or whether it’s Rackham)?

Weiss: There’s no one answer to that. What I have done and what has worked for me is strong communication.

Kyle: I’m curious as to where the control of decision-making in the programs ultimately lies? I had a colleague with a recent issue where a curriculum requirement was discussed and then suddenly later changed 6 months later.

Weiss: Curriculum decisions ultimately lie with the program, and that particular case is very unfortunate. I don’t see a case where we (Rackham) would get involved with something like that. We (Rackham) make decision about higher-level, more policy related issues (what constitutes decision, ensuring programs delineate criteria for candidacy, etc). We leave some level of autonomy to the programs. We do step in for some types of conflict resolutions (discrimination, etc), but for the most part decisions like that are handled by the individual programs.

Weiss: Thank you very much for having me, and I really appreciate the work you guy are doing.

V. OFFICER REPORTS
   a. President Phillip Saccone
Phil: There will be no meeting next week, due to Thanksgiving. Last meeting will be December 3rd. We will resume meetings in January after the break. We have lunch with the deans tomorrow and Friday, if you are volunteering/supporting that please stay after the meeting to figure out the details. We have the Band Night on Friday, should be a fun time hope to see everyone there.

Phil: I want to give some thanks to Chuky and Michael for the hard work over the last few weeks with all our events this week. Good team work. I have separate thanks for others as we get to those committees.

b. Vice President Chuky Mbagwu

c. Treasurer

We have $27,341 in the account. We’ve paid out $600 for the band already.

VI. Elections Director Report

David M: The election is underway and they are going well. We have a contested election in Division__ (3 candidates for 2 seats). For Div 2, there are 4 candidates for 5 seats.

Phil: Thank you so much David for the great work on this, communicating, organizing and getting the voting and platforms all set up.

VII. Instructor Evaluations

Discussed the state of the effort of opening up instructor evaluations. Discussed the value of this information, pros and cons, and addressing the faculty concerns/opposition.

VIII. RSG Office Hours

Phil: Chuky raised this up, and we’d like to see what the Board thinks about this.

Michael: We used to set up locations across campus twice a month for each rep. For some reason one year we had low attendance and ended up canceling them altogether. I’m in favor or restarting this.

IX. COMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Academic Affairs Committee

Phil: Thanks to Malcom and Stefan for all the work on this! You’ve done and are doing a phenomenal job. What’s your update?
Stefan: We have LWTD, Thursday and Friday from 12-1 in Pierpont and the Union.

Malcom: We are all set with food, just need to call Subway manager tomorrow morning to confirm order.

b. Budgetary Committee

Michael B: We had BC meeting late last week. It was a very good meeting, and lively discussion. Please see the minutes for details.

Motion to approve minutes (with exec editorial changes) by Michael, seconded by Nathan. Approved unanimously.

c. Elections Committee

d. Legislative Affairs Committee

e. Student Life Committee

Phil: Make sure to come out to Band Night on Friday!!

Mike: We are meeting very briefly tonight to work on the Survey that we’re sending out to the student body.

Phil: I would have liked to get this out this semester, but we will ensure that it goes out early next term. Thanks for all the hard work on this.

   i. Community Outreach & Social Action subcommittee

X. OPEN DISCUSSION

Motion to adjourn by Michael B, seconded by Mike H. Approved unanimously.

XI. ADJOURNMENT at X:XXpm.