1. Attendance
   a. Present: Tien-Huei Hsu, Anna Wagner, Lauren Knapp, Chris Tom, Andrew Crawford, Peter McGrath, Haven Allen, Ben Curtiss-Lusher, Pat Rooney, Alex Emly, Marisol Ramos, Eli Benchell Eisman, Alex Toulouse, Michael Benson, Kaitlin Flynn
   b. Absent (excused): Heidi Alvey, Dan Trubman
2. Approval of Agenda: Moved by Tien and seconded by Chris. Approved unanimously.
3. Approval of Previous Minutes: January 26, 2012. Motion to approve by Haven, seconded by Chris. Modification for Haven's attendance. Approved with two abstentions.
4. Officer Reports
   a. Michael- welcome to Janet, some execs went to see Obama last week and we'll try to see him again with SAGE in DC. Michael is also meeting with the city council members to look at the lease-signing policy and getting it potentially extended.
   b. Kaitlin- Bylaw review committee meeting will be meeting next week after the general board meeting. Communications committee is working on the newsletter. For the Graduate Academic Conference with MSU we have 68 students registered.
   c. Alex- $25,000 roughly in the account, budgetary committee meetings are closed and we will be approving the budget and funding requests now.
5. Winter 2012 budget
   a. Proposed budget has only had a few changes, for additions to the executive discretionary fund and elections committee. Alex also notes that we will be setting aside a portion of the budget for summer events and requests. Motion to approve the budget made by Alex, seconded by Eli. Discussion about the nature of the elections director position. Approved with one abstention.
6. Funding Request
   a. Student group submitted a funding request for the Fraker conference, given to philosophy, romance languages, and other likewise departments included in the packet for board members. The budget committee has met with them and is recommending $800 to fund the speaker and other parts of the event. Board members ask for clarification regarding the details of the event. Michael suggests that we add an additional $50 to printing. Motion to approve the $800 request moved by Alex T, seconded by Pat. Alex E objects and asks for an additional $50 for printing. Eli seconds this motion. All those
in favor of adding the $50 for printing 5 approved-8 opposed-2 abstentions. Motion fails. All those in favor of funding the $800 11-0-5 and it’s approved.

7. Guest speaker: Janet Weiss, Dean, Rackham Graduate school
   a. Janet is the Dean of Rackham, a professor at Ross and Ford schools, also a vice Provost and works as senior staff to work on a number of issues that are related to graduate education, including museums, libraries and the arts.
   b. Janet starts out by introducing what she does and works on at Rackham. She mentions that this year is the 100th year of Rackham Graduate School. There are a number of events that Rackham is sponsoring, including the previous Jorge Cham event, the Graduate Research Conference, an alumni panel in March, hosting Jonathan Cole for a talk ‘can graduate education survive as we know it?’ and other events. Also in October, a series of centennial lectures will be sponsored by various departments and programs that will host alumni to come and speak to students and faculty about their work and their degrees.
   c. Every Fall, Rackham does an academic review of about a quarter of the degree programs they offer, including Master’s and PhD. This includes collecting a lot of data about current and past students in the programs under review. This is primarily done through surveys. Then Rackham compile the data and provide information for departments on how to improve or continue on a good trajectory for the program. This year’s reviews have just been finished from the Fall. There are 108 PhD programs in Rackham and around 80 Master’s program. After the reviews take place, Rackham comes back to the departments and asks if the necessary improvements have been made. For instance, one thing they ask the students is if students get feedback beyond course grades on their progress. In 2006, Rackham found out that 47% of students were receiving feedback and Rackham believes at least 90% should be receiving feedback. Each year Rackham surveys, the number goes up. This year, 72% of students responded that they were receiving feedback. Alex T asks how Rackham is encouraging departments to provide feedback. Janet says that Rackham is trying to encourage departments directly and not just specific faculty to target all students in the programs. Pat asks if we could require departments to submit an annual report and Janet says yes. Marisol asks if Rackham asks if the quality of the feedback is useful. Janet says that they do ask if the feedback is useful and try to encourage programs with unhelpful feedback to change to a more comprehensive review. Eli asks if he’s seen trends in division specific departments. Janet says that there aren’t any trends but there are examples of particularly great programs and some that are not so great. Tien suggests that faculty could have ideas about how to provide constructive feedback and Janet responds that she agrees that examples are important for faculty. Tien also asks if the survey information is provided to students and Janet says that Rackham encourages the department chairs or grad studies representatives to share the information with the students. Michael asks who/which faculty members are given the information. Janet says that often it is a grad studies person and the department chair who receive the results. She also adds that
the information is shared with the dean and associate dean of the school or college as well. Kaitlin asks if the survey addresses the review of mentors and Janet says that the survey does not cover that directly and it would be challenging to do so.

d. Janet says that Rackham is now in the process of providing more for students with disabilities. She acknowledges that up until this point the needs of disabled students have perhaps not been as supported as could be. Rackham is trying to now serve as a node for the various offices that are involved in accommodations for particular circumstances. Additionally, Rackham is trying to appoint at least one person within programs to serve as a disability services coordinator to help students identify how to get the help they need. This will also involve centralizing some of the services and offices to provide better for these students. Janet says that in the survey Rackham asks if students have a condition that hinders their academic progress. This number of students is around 10% for PhD students. The good news is that many of these students are finding the support they need at the university but still it’s likely that students are falling through the cracks.

e. Janet also brings up the effort to add GSRAs to the bargaining unit that GSIs are currently covered under. There has been a hearing at MERC for the past two days and we will know soon if there will be an election or not. Janet says that she hopes that we as RSG can provide information for students prior to the election. Tien chimes in that the Academic Affairs Committee is currently planning such an event. Janet says that we have approximately 1500 GSRAs on campus and that they deserve to be educated as such. Nina brings up that we can’t necessarily consider the University to be neutral in this situation as various individuals have come out as against the union.

f. Eli asks Janet if the surveys that indicate that students aren’t receiving feedback or other concerns are followed up on appropriately. Janet responds that some of the concerns are department specific and gives some examples. Janet also says that when they see these concerns, Rackham follows up with the faculty. She mentions too that often the faculty respond to the concerns directly with the students. This process also allows for directly addressing issues across the school or college with the Deans of the appropriate school. These efforts have lead to changes in how departments operate and treat their students for the better. Janet mentions that very often the faculty are very responsive.

g. Andrew asks about the University’s stance on students with disabilities. He details a form that is required for students who need medication for ADHD and the form is not signed in time. U contracts with BCBS Michigan through gradcare to cover insurance costs. The exact rules about pharmaceutical coverage happen through the insurance company. Eli asks if Andrew has contacted the Benefits office. MB- Tien sits on SHIC. Students health insurance committee and will address this

h. Ben asks about the origin of the 9.0 GPA scale. JW- “we have no idea”. This was a question raised during one of the open forums. Asked another dean, who also had no idea. Went searching through registrar and HHR grad
school records. Suddenly appeared in 1953, the year RSG was founded. MB-
as a follow-up, and in response to Haven, would it be possible for an
individual unit (i.e. Ford School) be able to retain the old academic scale. JW-
There is no easy answer. All of the programs administered by a particular
unit (i.e. Rackham or Law school) have the same grading school. We can
definitely look at that. Haven- is it possible to have a weighted scale? JW-
absolutely possible. Ben- Are there trepidations about moving to the new
scale? JW- Was curious about who would take issue. Spoke with faculty
directors, more support for changing the program, but did not reach the 5:1
ratio observed in the students. Students applying for fellowships (NSF,
Fulbright) would be at a disadvantage. PR- an A- looks worse on a nine-point
scale. JW – sets us apart

i. Pete mentions that one thing that some graduate students are upset about is
that there aren’t very many places for group study, especially during finals
week. The issue is that the law library closes to non-law students after
certain times and Hatcher is full of undergrads. Pete suggests having
Rackham building open longer during weekends or during finals week.
Andrew suggests that a key card access system might work to allow grad
students into the building. Janet asks if undergrads use the Rackham building
as much, but agrees that the building could be open longer. She agrees that
this would be helpful but the issue would be staff, couldn’t have it year round.
She agrees that finals week would be good—perhaps the last week of class.
Andrew asks if cost-effectiveness could be increased by having student
volunteers proctor buildings. Janet says that could work but we would still
need someone to ensure that everyone was out of the building before closing
down for the night.

j. Chris brings up the Graduate Student Bill of Rights and how we could enforce
it. Chris asks how Rackham might enforce it. Michael clarifies that Janet
hasn’t seen the GSBOR yet. Chris rephrases and asks what authority Rackham
has over smaller programs and departments. Janet answers that Rackham
has a set of common academic policies that are mandatory for programs to
follow. At the level of policy, this is how Rackham requirements are enforced.
She recognizes that there is a lot that is not covered that departments do and
is not covered under Rackham jurisdiction. Janet says that one of the ways
students can give input is through surveys, but also she will look towards the
bill of rights to provide information about student needs or rights that are
not being served by Rackham. She says that this is one way we could do it.
Another thing that could be done is to take the document to the executive
board and see if they would like to adopt a similar document that could give
some enforcement to this issue.

k. Eli brings up Eugene’s issue. He asserts that the current Rackham processes
have failed him in these avenues. We ask Janet if the conflict of interest policy
could be looked at again and allow for a better infrastructure to maintain
academic integrity.

8. Committee Reports
a. Academic Affairs committee: working on Eugene’s issue and other issues. Tien moves to approve and receive the minutes, seconded by Haven and approved with one abstention.

b. Budgetary committee: met again today with another funding request over $700. The committee recommended not to fund them as it goes against the bylaws. We will also be funding an event with the Michigan engineering club.

c. Communications committee: Kaitlin mentions that the newsletter will be going out next week and Chris has been working on this primarily. The committee will also be working on procuring a banner for RSG events and a suggestion box. Heidi is working on the box.

d. Elections committee: no progress thus far, March election date.

e. Legislative affairs: minutes included in the packet. Meeting again next week to get off of the biweekly schedule. Ben points out a double name issue. Motion moved by Lauren and seconded by Nina. Approved unanimously.

f. Student life: meeting next week. Ice skating event a week from this Saturday and will probably need people to volunteer. Valentine’s day event at Bar Louie on the 13th. Motion to approve the minutes by Alex E and seconded by Chris and approved unanimously.

g. Bylaw review: Kaitlin says that the committee will be meeting at the end of next week’s meeting to discuss changes to the bylaws. We encourage all board members, especially the public policy students, to attend. The meeting will be informative and interesting.

h. COSAC: moving forward with three major projects this semester. We’ll be participating in DP day with the hopes of bringing 12-30 people and will be a huge event. Tentative dates for volunteering with habitat for humanity and might try to do some fundraising for the event and will likely tie in with the student life committee.

9. Philip Hanlon will be visiting next week and will likely discuss the budget.

10. Adjournment moved by Alex E and seconded by Pete.

11. Adjourned at 8:04pm.