Rackham Student Government
Board Meeting: November 13, 2013

Agenda

I. Call To Order
II. Approval of Agenda
III. Approval of Previous Minutes
   a. November 6, 2013
IV. Officer Reports
   a. Graduate Student Body President, Phil
   b. Graduate Student Body Vice President, Kaitlin
   c. Graduate Student Body Treasurer, Chuky
V. Committee Reports
   a. Academic Affairs
      i. Second reading instructor evaluations-postponed
      ii. Guide to Best Practices Update
   b. Budgetary
   c. Elections Committee
      i. Advertising
   d. Legislative Affairs
      i. SAGE Review
   e. Student Life
      i. Pistons game review
      ii. Bowling
VI. Collaboration with GEO: Graduate Student Survey
   a. Format
   b. Types of questions
VII. Student Health Committee Update
VIII. Open Discussion
IX. Adjournment

Included in packet:
RSG Board Minutes November 6, 2013
Resolution: Instructor Evaluations
GEO Survey
I. CALL TO ORDER: 7:16pm
   a. Present: Representatives Mike Hand, Michael Lang, Julian Bahr, Yiting Zhang, Chris Tom, David Barton, President Saccone, Treasurer Mbagwu, Ram, Brooke, Ben, Alex, Krithika,
   b. Absent:
   c. Excused:

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
Motion by ML, seconded by Ram. Approved unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES
Motion by MH, seconded by ML. Approved unanimously.

IV. OFFICER REPORTS
   a. President Phillip Saccone

LAURA PATTISON
Move directly to our guess Ms. Laura Pattison. Phil gives introduction and background. She helped guide Michigan’s transition to Google apps. Here to discuss direction and accessibility of Michigan’s online services. Board gives round of introductions. Laura gives an overview about the IT Council. Last year, they went through a process of seeking issues for top priority. One of the top issues was improved wireless connectivity across campus, and that was subsequently moved to the top of the priority list. The Council indeed welcomes and incorporates student input! In fact, the decision to move to Google services was driven by student support. The student body was surveyed (starting with LSA and expanding) and the results strongly preferred the Google transition. The previous email service showed that the majority of students (~80%) were forwarding mail to google services. This drove down the decision to move to Microsoft services. Accessibility was a major concern for switching, however they moved forward with the transition anyways. Since then, over the course of the year, the council has worked assertively with Google to make education accounts Google apps much more accessible. Worked closely with Google engineers to improve accessibility, and consistently insisted on quicker and further progress on accessibility. Wanted to ensure that blind and low visibility
accessibility was the first priority, and then subsequently prioritize accessibility tools for students with learning disabilities. The challenge: Blind people cannot see the screen, so they use assisted technology called screen-readers. Existing screen-readers were developed in a client-server environment; however, Google is a web environment and that brings challenges as the screen-readers are unable to fully work in that environment. Found a short-term workaround using various client-interfaces, but limited to calendar and mail. Told Google the highest priority was google doc for blind/low-visibility, then google docs for learning disability students, then back to mail and calendar items, etc. Also asked Google to improve their documentation on accessibility services. Michigan’s IT/Google team includes a blind/low-visibility individual that frequently tests the services, different from Google’s internal operating methods where there is little collaboration between services development. Worked to ensure that while still forward looking, that the current priorities list provided to Google were tended to. User accessibility testing for the month of October has just been completed, and the improvement from August to October has been tremendous – continuing to focus on current issues. For new issues and further development, aim to have batch improvements by beginning of terms and working with the Google engineers schedule.

Chris: What about learning disability individuals – which individuals are you first focusing on and how do you differentiate?

Laura: First focused on reading disability individuals as a high priority. For individuals with dyslexia, for example, screen-readers can be used but all the position information need not be reported. Using a scaled back version of the blind/low-viz screen-readers. Next on the priority are speech-disability individuals. We ensure testing of all these services each test cycle.

Phil: Has the university tracked the academic progress of the disability individuals from users before the Google switch and accessibility improvements?

Laura: We actually haven’t, no, but that is a very interesting idea to look at. We will like to do that in the future.

Michael Lang: Are there other schools that use services like this?

Laura: There are many large and small schools that use Google services. University of Minnesota for example transitioned before Michigan did. Google indicated they would be willing to work directly with University of Michigan because of the university’s very public commitment to accessibility for the entire university community. This resonated with Google and forged a good relationship. The regents are also watching this process very closely, considering if Google doesn’t fix all accessibility then potentially switch to another platform? (What a headache)
Chris: Do we pay Google for these services, or do they simply benefit from advertisement?

Laura: Per the contract, as long as someone’s status is “student” Google cannot advertise. However, they can do so for alumni (has not happened yet).

Mike Hand: When making switch to the Google platform, I’ve noticed that people in the graduate student level have switched to their own personal gmail/Google account. Is there a planned migration tool for students’ personal accounts to the university Google accounts/services? There is much benefit to being completely in the UM system.

Laura: We don’t have that planned but it might be an interesting development.

Chris: Do we continue to keep our university email accounts after graduation?

Laura: Yes, you do get to keep your email account (@umich.edu) forever. What we used to do is that we would guarantee email forwarding email for life to any other email account. Now, with the Google services you can just keep the “umich.edu”. We also have services for cloud storage with Box. Some of the benefits is that there is no contractual issues (for example if Dropbox goes out of business, all files and services go with it. Not so for Box). The idea was that Google docs/drive was for collaboration and then Box would be for large file storage and transfer. Now that Drive came along, users have both options and lots of storage space and options.

Julian: Are there migration services for new students coming in?

Laura: The migration tools that we used at the beginning of the transition are still readily available, but there may not be as much awareness for students coming in now. Those services are available on the MTools(?) website.

Alex: I agree with Mike Hand and Julian regarding migration, it’s not very clear for new students how to get through with migration.

Ram: One of the limitations is that there are not many Google services (Drive in particular) are available on Linux Red Hat. I think in terms of accessibility, this is also another area to target (Michael Lang also seconds this)

Laura: (to the group) What is the biggest IT barrier for all of you?

Alex: MWireless connectivity is a big issue for me. I’m a GSI this term, and for some discussion section we ask students to bring their laptops to connect to various services. The issue is that MWireless is very unstable and students experience connectivity problems and frequent disconnects.
Laura: We have allocated and prioritized efforts to improve the wireless infrastructure at the University. People have multiple devices, and some issues where people must be asked to disconnect their devices for a lecturer or other person to be able to connect and/or access services. I appreciate your input towards this.

Alex: Is there a plan or milestones for the project?

Laura: Plan has not been approved yet, but we do have a plan.

Ram and Mike Hand: VPN services need improvement.

Laura: We can definitely do that. A more robust identity management system is also on the list for priorities, to help correct the need for multiple sign-ins or VPN log-ins for authentication/access.

Michael Lang: Pet peeve: Having to sign into umich account twice sometimes.

Laura: Yes, we realize the system is clunky and working to improve it.

[Closing] Laura: I really appreciate all of your input and the opportunity to speak with you all.

Phil: Lots went on last week, leasing forum, elections, etc.

b. Vice President Kaitlin Flynn
Phil, on behalf of Kaitlin: Newsletter is coming out, I’ve tasked MH and ML for communications checks before sending out the letter. Also the website, tasking Julie for more development.

c. Treasurer Chuky Mbagwu
$28000 etc.

V. Binding Resolution on Instructor Reports
Motion by – and seconded by --.

Phil: Any comments?
MH: I like the format of it, but I may have some grammatical changes.
Phil: We can give the exec editorial liberties to polish things up.
Ryne: Does this simply give us access to the information, or do just have access to a database (user friendly vs. just data)?
MH: This is currently a stop-gap until they set up something more user friendly later on. They have a plan for this already, and I think it would be disadvantageous to somewhat stipulate that in the resolution. (They are already going in that direction).
Phil: I think that it is good as it is and can move forward with it, etc.
Chris: Given that it’s been through the committee and been voted on it already, etc., I second Phil’s notion.
ML: What is the point of it
Yiting: Often times we don’t have a choice in taking courses/choose profs. So it may be able to help, but other times the situation can’t be helped.
Julian: True, it may not be able to help all people maybe in those departments, but others may find lots of benefit.
MH: It’s a good additional resource for planning a well.
Chris: It supports the fact that people will also be filling out their teacher evaluations around the same time. For faculty, it will hold them accountable and improve the quality of teaching.

Motion to table by MH, seconded by Chris Tom.

VI. COMMITTEE UPDATES
a. Academic Affairs Committee
Motion to approve minutes CT, seconded by MH. Approved unanimously with 1 abstention.

Chris: We had the town halls last week, both well attended. Good conversations with the Deans, etc.
Alex: Commenting on the north campus one, format was improved and better than in the past.
Chris: I think we had close to record attendance. Deans will be forwarded all remaining questions that were not tended to in the meetings.

Also, non-discrimination policy is on the table and going to be discussed by ------- committee, then go on to the Board(?) then the regents, etc. Overall it was a great conversation to meet with ----- and see his historical perspective. There has been a case where the NDC policy was changed and that was for gender NDC, that was a grassroots movement, etc.

Phil: At some point this is going to pass the board and we’ll be looking how it will move forward.

b. Budgetary Committee
Motion to receive and approve by CM, seconded by Ryne. Approved unanimously.

Friendly amendment, with editorial discretion etc.

c. Legislative Affairs Committee
Phil: Just got back from SAGE, UNC is beautiful. So jealous of Michael Lang. We met with other top tier university counterparts, had discussion about best practices, hopefully things we can incorporate here at Michigan. Set our agenda for our federal advocacy trip in the spring.
Chuky: First time there, learned a lot, very helpful in focusing our agenda for the spring.
Phil: We will minutes from SAGE coming out soon.

Leasing forum was last week, could have been better attended. However, the discussion was very vibrant.

d. **Student Life Committee**
   Motion to approve minutes by MH, seconded by Ryne. Approved unanimously.
   Mike Hand: Look in the minutes for our events. We will be having the Pistons game on Friday(?) We need volunteers!
   Phil: Please! We need volunteers! It’s very important, sold out event. We really need people to show up for this.
   
   Mike Hand: Bowling event is coming up on the 27th. If anyone on SLC (or not on SLC) wants to make a graphic, please contact Mike Hand. Michael Lang will take on the graphic (thanks!)

e. **Elections Committee**

f. **Legislative Affairs Committee**

g. **Student Life Committee**

VII. **OPEN DISCUSSION**
   STUFF......

VIII. **ADJOURNMENT** at 8:36pm. Motion by CT, seconded by Ben.
A RESOLUTION TO MAKE INSTRUCTOR REPORTS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

WHEREAS, voluntary course evaluations are provided by the students at both undergraduate and graduate levels; AND

WHEREAS, these individual course evaluations are consolidated into Instructor Reports by the Office of Registrar; AND

WHEREAS, these Instructor Reports are currently available only to instructors and departments; AND

WHEREAS, the availability of these Instructor Reports to students would enable them to make more informed decisions about crediting courses, especially those from other schools and departments; AND

WHEREAS, the university-wide accessibility to Instructor Reports would motivate the students to provide thoughtful evaluations; NOW ON BEHALF OF THE STUDENT BODY OF THE HORACE H. RACKHAM GRADUATE SCHOOL, BE IT

RESOLVED, the Office of the Registrar, in conjunction with the Rackham Student Government, institutes a policy to ensure that the Instructor Reports are available to all students; AND BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED, following the adoption of this policy, the Office of the Registrar would communicate this policy to all enrolled students prior to the third week of each academic term; AND BE IT FINALLY

RESOLVED, the compiled Instructor Reports shall be both hosted and disseminated by the Office of the Registrar to ensure accuracy, integrity, security and sustained

1 http://www.ro.umich.edu/evals
2 http://www.ro.umich.edu/evals/#FS_Reports_Types
4 http://www.ro.umich.edu/evals/CU_TE_TeachingEvals_QR.pdf
availability of the Instructor reports.

**AUTHORS**

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**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, Phillip A. Saccone, President of the Rackham Student Body, do hereby approve / veto this resolution on this the _______ day of _____, 2013.

____________________________________
Phillip Saccone
President, Rackham Graduate Student Body
Graduate Needs Survey:

About you:

Department/Program:

Gender Identity:

Ethnic Identity:

Marital Status:

Are you a parent?

Age:

The University of Michigan has recently received a number of high profile gifts from donors who say they want to help graduate and professional students. This survey is an effort to better understand the wants and needs of the graduate student population.

1) If the University put you in charge of spending $85 million to improve the lives of graduate students, how would you spend it?

2) How could the university support you better academically (smaller classes, professional development, facilities, conference travel, research support)?

3) How could the university support you better financially/materially (salary, financial aid, parking, printing, office/workspace, emergency funds)?

4) How could the university better support more interdisciplinary collaboration?

[Circle all that apply]:

5) How could the university improve your workspace?
   a. Provide dedicated workspace
b. Provide locked storage space
c. Provide more computers
d. Provide more ergonomic furniture
e. Provide more privacy/quiet space
f. Other_____________________________________

6) How could the university better support your research?
   a. Provide more conference travel funds
   b. Provide more lab space
c. Provide more mentoring
d. Provide more summer funding
e. Facilitate information-sharing between grad students (eg. archives of prelims lists/job letters/teaching statements)
f. Other _________________________________

7) How could the university make you a more effective teacher?
   a. I don't teach
   b. Provide more training and professional development
c. Provide more mentoring
d. Decrease class sizes
e. Improve classroom facilities
f. Promote a more diverse student body
g. Make e-learning tools more available
h. Improved undergraduate financial aid
i. Other _________________________________

8) How could your current housing situation be improved?
   a. Lower rent
   b. More parking
c. Better access to public transportation
d. Better access to groceries
e. More privacy
f. Better proximity to campus
g. Better response to maintenance requests
h. More space
i. Less allergenic conditions
j. Better sound insulation
k. More affordable utilities
l. Better sense of community
m. Other_______________________________

9) How could the university improve your health?
   a. Provide affordable health insurance
b. Provide better access to doctors/nurses

c. Provide more exercise opportunities

d. Provide better access to affordable healthy food

e. Attend to occupational safety hazards

g. Other

10) How much would you pay to live on campus in a shared seven-bedroom apartment with an interdisciplinary group of graduate students that included a grocery store, fitness facilities, shared kitchens and personal bathrooms?

    a. ________________
    b. I would not live in such a space