Rackham Student Government Board Meeting: July 31, 2013

Agenda

I. Call To Order

II. Approval of Agenda

III. Approval of Previous Minutes
   a. July 17, 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. Graduate Student Bill of Rights
      ii. Conflict resolution flow-chart
   b. Budgetary
   c. COSAC/Student Life
      i. Fall picnic volunteers
      ii. Pool event in August
      iii. Natalie 5K- Winter 2014
   d. Communications
      i. Email and Website update
   e. Legislative Affairs
      i. SAGE updates

VI. Open Discussion

Included in packet:
RSG Board Minutes July 17, 2013
SLC/COSAC July 29, 2013
AAC July 24, 2013
Council of Graduate Student’s Position Paper: Student Debt
VII. Adjournment
CALL TO ORDER: 7:09pm

Present: Vice President Kaitlin Flynn, David Malewski, David Barton, Mike Hand, Michael Lang, Ram Balachandran, Brooke Horton, Julian Bahr

Absent:

Excused: Chris Tom, President Phil Saccone

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

a. ML motions, seconded by DM. Approved unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES, 6/19/13

a. MH brings up that a link to the FB page should have been emailed out. Kaitlin will get on that. MB is listed as attended when he wasn’t present but excused.

b. MH motions to approve with above amendments. Approved with 1 abstention.

IV. OFFICER REPORTS

a. President Phil Saccone: Out for the weekend, bachelor party. Best wishes to Phil.

Discussion:

DM has question about what the background check entails. MB explains that all new faculty will receive the checks, it won’t be fingerprints or pictures. A question is raised about who this check information goes to and whether it is stored. Kaitlin explains that much of it will be based on self-reported information. Ram has concerns about how to protect the information once it is given up. MB says it is protected by FERPA(?), i.e. the University cannot legally release it under some of those statutes. Brooke asks why this is being initiated or pushed forward, Kaitlin responds that partially as a result of a child pornography scandal somewhere on campus(?). DM has concerns about who the determining factor about “guilt”, and what is the protocol for international students? MH says that for PhD students there is a funding guarantee, but if this background check becomes a contingency factor then it nullifies that guarantee. Kaitlin says that Janet is well aware of this. She emphasizes that is in the nascent stages and these concerns will be addressed. Brooke raises the point that the checks must be done on all students (including undergrads) unless it is limited to GSI status, MB responds that all individuals that receive a paycheck will be included in the background check (and
brooke says it may make sense to put some of this into the hiring process of GSRAs/GSIs instead of the grad school application process, Kaitlin agrees that there must be a better way to integrate this.

There will be a new graduate student housing called Munger building. There was very little consultation with the graduate body regarding the housing or other decisions. At first glance, it appears to consist of 7 bedroom shared apartment layouts with very high rates for rent (current housing stipends were not taken into consideration). Kaitlin will draft a letter of discontent, a sense of the student body, with the biggest issue being the unaffordability. Unfortunately much of this is already set in stone and the resolution is to emphasize not to make similar future decisions without graduate student input.

b. **Vice President Kaitlin Flynn**: Kaitlin has been assisting Phil with the above duties. She will draft the resolution. Working with the communications committee on various action items and also getting the T-shirts done. Planning a happy hour.

c. **Treasurer Chuky Mbagwu**: Ad hoc Budget Comm meeting last week, closed the Vaughan Symposium funding application. Awarded them $800, consistent with past 2 years’ funding level. State of the treasury is unchanged since last time.

**V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

a. **Legislative Affairs**: Come to the next LAC meeting if interested in pushing for keeping student loan rates low. There are many moves being made on this at the federal level.

b. **Academic Affairs**: Hasn’t met in some time, but they are meeting with Dean Weiss and overall pushing forward on action items from last week. Flowchart is still in work and going through iterations given suggestions from last meeting. Ram raises concerns that we must vote on the resolution this week to get it into the packet, Kaitlin responds that it is moving to an online packet and thus our deadline is now pushed back further in August.

c. **Communications**: Julian is a superstar, and he’s on top of the newsletter. MB says the website will be beta released on Aug 2nd to the Board. We will test it and give feedback to Benson. No specific feature requests! (jk, not really) But definitely send in suggestions to RSG exec. Potentially putting a photo and biography section, MB can collect information about that later/soon. No minutes for this meeting (simple mixup).

d. **Student Life**: Issues with the timing of the happy hour at Charlie’s. Could either be from 4-6pm or 6-7(?) which are very limited timing; alternative is to choose a different bar. Bill’s Beer Garden was a good event last time, the only limitation is that there is not abundant food options. ML brings up Seva’s as a good option. Kaitlin will call back Charlie’s and get more info. Cedar Point trip is this weekend, no need for chaperones. Fall Picnic planning is underway, mandatory
attendance if Board memebers are around. MH motions to approve minutes, MB seconds. Approved unanimously.

e. **Budgetary:** CM motions to approve the minutes, MB seconds. Approved unanimously. Ram reminds us to publicize this in the newsletter; Julian will take care of it. MB explains why RSG uses a reimbursed funding model as opposed to a forward funded model. Historically we’ve allocated money that is not fully utilized.

VI. **Open Discussion:** Ram suggests a push for likes on our Facebook page by prize incentives, etc. ML and Student Life committee are really pushing for a Rackham 5K-type event. If interested, come to next SLC/COSAC meeting. Brooke mentions that some people would have liked to hear/see an email about the Cedar Point trip earlier.

VII. **Adjournment:** Motion by ML seconded by MB. Adjourned at 7:57pm.
RACKHAM STUDENT GOVERNMENT
STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE MEETING
July 29, 13
ESPRESSO ROYAL, xxx S. State St.
6:30 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER: 6:41pm
   a. Present: Representatives Benson, Zhang, Treasurer Mbagwu, President & Chair Saccone
   b. Absent: Representatives Lang
   c. Excused: Representative Hand, Vice President Flynn

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

III. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

IV. CHAIR’S REPORT

Phil: Looking forward to tomorrow’s social event. We’re going to have a good time, I’m looking forward to seeing a lot of RSG reps tomorrow. Let’s discuss music and a bounce house for the fall picnic. Phil will email the Board encouraging them to attend.

Michael: Provides the history of both live music and the bounce house. Both started during his time as president. The committee supports having both.

Phil: Mike Hand is working on the canoe event. Natalie seems to want to focus service events in the fall. As far as happy hours go, I’m wondering if we need to have one in August. Also, lets talk about the Fuller Pool event, do we want to do it?

Michael: I’d suggest that we do it, we can make the cost as low or as high as we want and students really like the event. If we say that we’re going to pay for the first 80 to 100 people, the cost will be below $400 and will be a breeze to manage… we will just need one RSG rep to run the event (ideally 2 for company but unnecessary.) Michael will contact the pool and confirm the budget and the date Aim for the 17th.

Phil: The committee agrees to host the the Fuller Pool event during the week of August 19th. Also, the picnic will be held on August 30th. Michael will be giving phil contact info and phil will be contacting our vendors.

V. 5k
Phil: Spoke with Natalie regarding hosting a 5k in the spring. Natalie is going to look into how it could be organized within Rackham. The idea that seems the most feasible at this point is to branch it out to include all graduate academic and professional schools. This could also include alumni. There is some talk about involving MHealthy and including a “pre-race” carbing up event.

VI. OPEN DISCUSSION

VII. ADJOURNMENT at 6:53pm.
RACKHAM STUDENT GOVERNMENT
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
7/24/2013, 6:30 PM
RACKHAM GRADUATE BUILDING
2ND FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM, NORTH ALCOVE

I. CALL TO ORDER: 6:38 PM

II. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

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

Present: Chris Tom, Phil Saccone, Alexander Gutierrez, Brooke Horton

Excused: Kaitlin Flynn

Unexcused:

III. OUTSTANDING ACTION ITEMS

a. [Michael] Email Phil about Assistant Registrar contact information Registrar questions will be brought up with Janet; see item below.

b. [Phil] Email to Registrar about why course evaluation information is private
   Scheduled for next meeting with Janet.

IV. UPDATE ON MEETING WITH JANET WEISS

a. Graduate student bill of rights
   To be brought up at next meeting with Janet.

b. Conflict resolution
   Issues are brought to the conflict resolution representative of the complainant’s school.
   Phil to ask Darlene regarding enforcement of settlement and time requirements for setting up the board and other resolution milestones.

c. Background checks on incoming graduate students
   • New students – will occur either in application or hiring process. Possibly better after admission (cheaper)
   • Current students – some details need to be figured out for retroactively applied background checks
   • International students – checks not possible

d. Graduate housing
   Consulting with grad students should have been done somewhere
along the line to make the housing suitable and affordable for students.
Phil to contact Jill McDonough regarding the planning process.

V. CONFLICT RESOLUTION RESOURCES
a. Student resources need to be established and promoted (e.g. people who
can direct students to appropriate contacts). Suggest changing “resolution officer”
to “ombudsman” and appointing an “RSG ombudsman” who has information
regarding the ombudsmen for each school.

VI. RESOLUTION FOR ACCESS TO INSTRUCTOR REPORTS
a. [Michael/Phil] Talk to Janet during meeting about course evaluation
privacy

VII. OPEN DISCUSSION
a. Phil – Spring career fair for Rackham. First focus on Division III & IV
careers, which might be less obvious. Boston Group, other consulting and
investment banking are possibilities.
b. Phil – Opening up employment resources for everyone on campus.
Currently largely internal to each school.

VIII. ACTION ITEMS
a. [Phil] Talk to Janet during next meeting about course evaluation privacy.
b. [Phil] Ask Darlene regarding enforcement of conflict resolution settlement
and time requirements for setting up the board and other resolution
milestones.
c. [Phil] Contact Jill McDonough regarding the new graduate housing
planning process.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: 7:34 PM

X. APPENDIX
a. Ram’s resolution:

A Resolution to provide view access to past three Instructor reports through
Wolverine Access

Voluntary course evaluations are provided by the students to course instructors at both
undergraduate and graduate levels.

These individual course evaluations are consolidated into Instructor reports by the Office
of Evaluations and Examinations.
As an unstated policy, these Instr reports are made available only to the Faculty and the department staff.

These evaluation reports are also considered confidential by the Departments and are not available to view for students.

This lack of these evaluation reports severely disables the students from making an informed decision about crediting a course.

Such lack of information fuels a culture of lack of transparency which is anathema to a public educational institution as University of Michigan.

The availability of evaluation reports through wolverine access would enable students to make informed decision about crediting a course.

Further the availability of the course evaluations will also motivate the instructors to perform well in their teaching commitments, which is occasionally lost in a research university like Michigan.

The availability of course evaluations will also motivate the students to provide thoughtful comments regarding their course experience.

Due to these advantages we propose to provide view access to at-least three previous instructor reports (preferably with comments) for all the courses through wolverine access during the enrollment period.

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.
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\(^1\) 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\(^1\);” AND

WHEREAS, “gender identity” is interpreted to refer to the self-identity of the individual\(^2\); “gender expression” is interpreted to the actions of an individual to realize their gender identity\(^3\); 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\(^4\);” 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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1 Michigan Standard Practice Guide (sect. 201.35)
2 Jackie Simpson, Head of the Spectrum Center, adapted from personal communication on Feb 13th, 2012.
3 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 union⁵; 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 status⁶; 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 protection⁷

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

⁶ National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, Incident Response Report records
⁷ 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
One of the key conclusions of the recently issued National Academy of Science report on *Research Universities and the Future of America* is that graduate education is critical to the country’s strength and prosperity. The authors of this landmark study recognized that our collective failure to see graduate education as a national priority is threatening the capacity for America to develop the talent required to meet national needs and to compete in the global economy. Rarely does the country have a better opportunity to reverse a dangerous trend than it does today, as we consider debates over the student loan interest rates in Washington, D.C. Policymakers must take this opportunity to put America back on the right track by restoring graduate students to the same status as undergraduate students, affording these groups the same benefits when borrowing money from the federal government to pursue an advanced education.

**Recent actions have disproportionately disadvantaged graduate students**

Historically, the interest rate for subsidized and unsubsidized student loans has been the same, whether fixed or variable. For PLUS loans, even with a higher interest rate and cap, the difference has been closer to 1.5%. Graduate students have long been a good investment since they are more likely to pay off their student loans and have had much lower default rates. For this reason, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scores any increase in the borrowing limits for PLUS loans as a “money saver.”

Actions over the past two years have changed the student loan landscape for graduate students and created doubts about their ability to pursue a graduate education. As of July 2012, graduate students no longer qualify for the in-school interest subsidies, a policy that makes them eligible only for unsubsidized loans and Grad PLUS loans, each with an interest rate higher than the 3.4% rate of subsidized loans. The savings that were generated from this policy change went to support a one-year extension of the 3.4% interest rate on subsidized loans and to sustain the $5,550 maximum Pell Grant award. Graduate students are not eligible for either.

CBO has also estimated that the savings to the Federal government from PLUS loans is 64 cents for every dollar loaned. For unsubsidized loans the savings is 40 cents and for subsidized loans it is 14 cents. From these numbers it is clear that the federal government is making a profit off of federal loans to graduate students and using the savings to pay for a lower interest rate on subsidized loans and sustain the escalating cost of the Pell Grant program.
The Pell program is critical to addressing clear inequities in opportunity in America and for building a rich pool of domestic talent to attend graduate schools in the future. It must be funded. But this strategy of borrowing from Peter to pay Paul will simply diminish opportunity for both Peter and Paul going forward. The graduate debt burden is especially heavy on students from underrepresented populations.

**Graduate student debt is growing, particularly among underrepresented students**

Many graduate students carry the burden of accumulated debt in order to pursue their degrees. According to data drawn from the 2007-08 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:08), 73% of master’s recipients had an average cumulative undergraduate and graduate debt of $41,000, while 67% of those who received doctoral degrees had an average cumulative debt of $60,000. Among whites, 70% of master’s recipients had cumulative debt averaging $38,000, and 72% of doctoral recipients had cumulative debt averaging $60,000. Among African-Americans, 87% of master’s recipients and 85% of doctoral recipients had cumulative debts averaging $52,000 and $68,000, respectively. Additionally, among Hispanics, 82% of master’s recipients had cumulative debt averaging $46,000.*

However, it is worth noting that new debt acquired exclusively in graduate school is substantial as well. NPSAS data also show that underrepresented minority groups, the groups that should be a growing percentage of domestic students, carry a higher level of debt than their majority counterparts. Among all students, 46% of master’s students and 39% of doctoral students incurred graduate debt during the 2007-08 academic year. Among white students, 41% of master’s and 38% of doctoral students incurred debt, while these numbers for African-American students were 68% and 62% and for Hispanic students 58% and 41%, respectively. In part, this is because minority students are more likely to be enrolled in fields where student are typically entirely self-funded. This includes fields such as public administration, social and behavioral sciences, and education.

But borrowing is beginning to grow in STEM fields as well. In the past it was fair to assume that STEM students were able to secure full support through a combination of assistantships, fellowships, and employer aid. However, analysis of data drawn from the same data source show that for master’s and doctoral students in some STEM fields of study, loans are becoming an increasing part of the aid they need for graduate study. And as more data become available they are likely to show that minority students again are shouldering a heavier burden.

**Where we stand now in the debate**

The current debate in Congress over how to address immediate concerns about sky-rocketing student debt provides an opportunity to build a pipeline of domestic talent in America and to sustain the country’s capacity to secure its future through a robust system of graduate education. And yet as Congress considers a variety of proposals to address the matter of student debt, the disparity in graduate student treatment

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* Reliable data for Hispanic doctoral graduates are unavailable
continues. All but one of the market-based interest rate proposals widens the gap between the interest rates for subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford loans and PLUS loans, as well as the caps for each.

Similarly, the proposals to extend the current 3.4% rate do not address the inequities already being experienced and could result in even greater disparities for graduate students as sources of funding are sought to pay for the extension. Sequestration has also resulted in higher fees on loans for graduate students.

The elimination of the Grad PLUS program has been proposed as one of the further cuts that could be made to meet additional sequestration targets. Eliminating the Grad PLUS program means that not only would graduate students continue to pay higher interest rates on federal loans, they would have to take out more costly private, direct-to-consumer loans.

**Not just belt-tightening**

Graduate students must borrow to attend school. The rate of borrowing is highest for students from underrepresented populations and in those fields where underrepresented populations are most heavily enrolled. But borrowing also happens across the board and students increasingly, even in STEM fields where historically institutional support has been stronger, now find borrowing is an essential component of attending graduate school. If we want American students to pursue graduate education we need to recognize graduate education as part of the educational pipeline in America.

**Income-Based Loan Repayment is not the answer**

Income based repayment (IBR) should not be considered the default option for all students when it comes to paying student loans. It certainly is not a justification for policies that will increase the discrepancy between undergraduate and graduate loan interest rates. IBR was established as a safety net for students who are taking on greater debt and facing a poor economy with fewer job options upon graduation. IBR provides for lower monthly payments over a longer period of time than the standard 10-year repayment plan.

With the IBR plan, however, the total amount that the student repays increases as does the unpaid principal and interest that will be forgiven, which under federal tax law is treated as one-time, taxable income. This tax provision substantially reduces the value of loan forgiveness, especially if the borrower is unable to pay the full tax liability in one year. For graduate students paying higher interest rates to begin with, this burden becomes even more significant over time. An example from the New America Foundation’s “Safety Net or Windfall?” report illustrates the tax burden nicely: “If the amount forgiven is $20,000, under IBR the borrower would have to pay $5,000 in additional income taxes that year. Borrowers who receive loan forgiveness would likely have to pay state income taxes on the amount as well. What that means in a state with a flat 7 percent income tax, is that same borrower would owe a combined $6,400 in state and federal income taxes.”
Declining graduate student enrollment
Between the fall of 2010 and 2011, first-time graduate enrollment fell 1.7%. This was the second consecutive decrease in such enrollment since the fall of 2003. This decline was not only in fields one would expect such as education, but also in engineering and other STEM fields. In the past international students could be counted on to fill the gap, but preliminary estimates from a CGS survey of international student applications for the fall of 2013 indicate that the numbers from key countries are trending down. For example, applications from China, which in the past has accounted for 29% of international graduate students at U.S. institutions, appear to be down 5% for fall 2013 following double-digit increases for the past several years. Given the global competition for graduate students it is essential that we find ways to not only reverse the declines in US graduate enrollment but significantly accelerate the flow of domestic students into our graduate programs. And in doing this we know from earlier research that financing is a strong factor in graduate student success. In a recent study of doctoral program completion, 80% of the respondents in an exit survey indicated that financial support was a key factor in their ability to complete the degree.

If the future of America is the future of graduate education, we must act now
The declining trend in US student enrollment in graduate programs suggests that America’s potential graduate students are already seeing advanced study as beyond their reach. The present situation is not sustainable if our nation is to meet the needs for a diverse workforce and a global knowledge economy. The good news is that we have an opportunity to address this challenge today. Any fix to address the student loan interest rate dilemma and growing student debt cannot be made only with an undergraduate student focus. It must equalize treatment of graduate students, in terms of interest rates, whether fixed or market-based, and the caps on maximum rates that can be charged.