Graduate Student Congress
General Meeting Summary - October 2012

Following a brief introduction of the officers in attendance, the September 2012 Meeting Summary was projected for member review. With no objections, the meeting summary was accepted. All members can review the summary on the Graduate Student Congress website.

Reports from the Standing Committees

Social Committee – A survey is forthcoming to gauge the interests and availabilities of graduate students in social activities. The survey will include two options for a November Open House event. Member interest will determine which events are selected.

Also, the Congress is co-sponsoring an October Open House Event: The Politics of Latin American Migration with the Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies Program. Friday, October 12, 2012 from 2:00pm - 4:00pm in the Student Center room 231 - a lecture by Professor David Cook-Martin from Grinnell College and Professor Christian Zlomiski from University of Texas on immigration in politics and beyond.

If members have ideas for open house events, which can expand beyond lectures to include tours of laboratory facilities, round tables, interdisciplinary social events, etc., please email the committee chair, Carolyn Troha.

Professional Development Committee – Dr. Patrick Osmer is not able to present at the November 1, 2012 Career Pathways Outside of Academia event; however, the event will continue as scheduled with an expanded moderated panel and Q&A session. There will be a reception following the event. We will try to reschedule Osmer at a later time. Funding will come in part from the GSC account and in part from the SGA general allotment to the GSC.

The Conference may need to change dates. Details and a Call for Proposal to be released soon!

The working group assigned to create the survey of Graduate School Service is not yet prepared to release the survey. A member asked if the survey will be released to all graduate students. This brought up the issue of the GSC having access to all graduate students emails – could we add new students each term to the list-serv and send a quick message allowing them to opt-out, rather than hoping students will opt-in?

Fundraising – The Congress has $527 in its account with $5,000 set aside in SGA funding for the conference. Heather Davis is going to meet with Todd Cox next week to clarify whether or not this money can be used on food, which will be the bulk of the expense of the conference. If anyone has ideas for fundraising, please contact the committee chair and Treasurer, Brad Fox.
We forgot to follow-up on the issues addressed at the first meeting for the Graduate Council. These items will be addressed at the November meeting.

**Voting for Representatives**

A thoughtful discussion on the transient nature of member attendance at meetings included the information that the University of Louisville guarantees membership at its monthly meetings by holding $40,000 in travel funding which can only be disbursed to programs who come to meetings.

The membership seemed to agree that voluntary attendance was preferable to forced attendance but brainstormed ideas to encourage attendance (including hold a meeting at the Cat’s Den on a Friday or Saturday when free food and game play is available to the organization) and how to get feedback from members who are not able to attend meetings.

The final determination was to vote by acclamation at individual meetings.

**Issues for Congress Consideration**

A UK Students United Against Sweatshops representative, Rohith Jayaram, shared with members a letter to the President which has already been endorsed by a handful of other UK student organizations. While all of the GSC members agreed to an endorsement by the Congress, several suggestions were made to strengthen the letter, including urging the UK bookstore to release its spending figures by vendor for comparison, impressing upon the President the notion of raising our national profile by following in the footsteps of institutions such as Duke and Michigan (institutional isomorphism comes into play in this argument, as well), reaching out to the students who initiated a change to the Alta Garcia company to get some figures to support the argument, and most importantly, rearranging the content of the letter to emphasize the benefit to the university and urgency of the issue. The representative will share these suggestions with his organization.

While members present supported the idea of a working group to develop some kind of Family Resources listing for graduate students, no members volunteered to lead the group. If members who could not attend the meeting are interested in starting a working group, please contact Heather Davis.

There was a lengthy and lively discussion of the Future of Graduate Education at UK, prompted by the letter sent last week from the University (Faculty) Senate to the President addressing their concerns about impending budget cuts and their request to share governance in budgeting decisions. An article about the letter was published last week in the Herald-Leader: [http://www.kentucky.com/2012/10/04/2360392/university-of-kentucky-faculty.html](http://www.kentucky.com/2012/10/04/2360392/university-of-kentucky-faculty.html). There is additional concern because President Capilouto attended a DGS meeting last week and was unable (unwilling?) to articulate a vision for graduate education at the University of Kentucky.
Because there is no direct issue at hand (such as the recent policy change on tailgating which students banded together to reverse), we have three options: ignore it, be reactive, or be proactive.

Members agreed unanimously to support the faculty, and one action we will take is to seek out a partnership with the Senate to ensure that we are represented at and involved in future budget discussions.

**What’s at stake?** The future of graduate education at UK is unclear. There is now a precedent at UK for inequitable staff cuts in response to budgetary demands. We want to protect graduate students from similar inequitable decisions. Further, even if a TA’s job is protected, there is no guarantee of what the minimum salary for that position will be nor that it will include a reasonable workload for the pay provided. GAs and RAs maybe in even more vulnerable positions. Our health insurance benefits have decreased while costs have increased and travel and fellowship funding has been slashed annually for years.

**What can/should we do?** Ideally, we need to accomplish two tasks: (1) raise graduate student awareness and support and (2) increase our visibility so that we are a part of the discussion. Ideas included inviting the president to a meeting, making him aware that graduate students are a direct link to the quality of undergraduate education, develop specific recommendations (funding, future applications, etc.) for a letter to the President (though a letter may not be enough). Focus on UK’s status as an R1 institution in Kentucky – graduate students are essential to advanced research. Get the word out to graduate students, student leaders, graduate faculty, on facebook, etc. Use a catchy title to grab students’ attention. One idea might be to gather on the University lawn as a collective to raise our visibility in a very literal sense – this would only be successful if hundreds of students were involved.

**What will be done:**

1. A short message will be crafted ASAP and sent out to as many constituents as possible for wide distribution among all graduate students to raise awareness and support.
2. Frank Appiah will meet with University Senate members before next month’s meeting to share our support and to ensure their cooperation with and support of the Congress.

Ideas from other members are welcome!! Send any and all ideas, suggestions, concerns, questions, etc. to graduatestudentcongress@gmail.com.

**Open Floor**

Lazarus Eze of the UK Student Public Health Association shared with the Congress the existence of a petition on change.org which urges campus leaders to increase the healthy options available in vending machines across campus. Upon receipt of the link, the petition will be shared with the list-serv.