



Cornell University
Graduate and Professional
Student Assembly

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GPSA 2008-2009 Year-End Report

It is with this report that I summarize the actions of the GPSA in the later half of the 2008-2009 academic year. Many of our actions were continuations of work begun during the fall semester, while other actions were newly-realized. The report concludes with a glimpse into the year to come.

I. Resolutions

The GPSA passed four resolutions in the spring semester.

“R.7 Regarding the Student Assembly's Moratorium on the Registration of New Student Organizations” clarified the Student Assembly's Resolution 21, which called for a moratorium on the registration of new student organizations. Resolution 7 simply stated that there was no such moratorium on the registration of groups having at least 40% graduate and professional student membership. The resolution was co-authored by members of the GPSA and SA, showing cooperative effort and understanding between the two Assemblies on this matter.

As a follow-up to **“R.4 Regarding the Cornell Academic Calendar”**, which was presented in November and subsequently passed in January, the GPSA expressed another opinion on the academic calendar with **“R.8 Regarding Support for the Observance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day”**. Through this resolution, the GPSA expressed a desire for the spring semester to be reviewed – like the fall semester – and to consider the recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January.

“R. 9 Regarding Charter Revisions and Recommendation” was a comprehensive acceptance of new Charter, bylaw, and funding documents for the GPSA. This resolution and the four documents will be described in more detail in the next section.

Finally, **“R.10 Regarding Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Services and Administrative Support”** was passed in support of the LGBT community's desire to have LGBT services consolidated under the LGBT Resource Center and enhanced development efforts for re-staffing of support personnel.

The GPSA would like to thank the Student Activities Office, Dean Hubbell, Dean Fry, Provost Fuchs, and yourself – President Skorton – for recognition of these resolutions.

II. Charter Review

In December, an ad-hoc Charter Review Committee was tasked with verifying and clarifying the GPSA Charter. Their exhaustive efforts were passed by the GPSA at our last meeting in April and may be summarized by the following:

- Reviewed the **Charter** and separated out three supporting documents: the **GPSA Bylaws**, the **GPSA Byline Allocation Procedures**, and the **GPSA Eligibility Criteria and Obligations for Byline Funded Organizations**.
- Compartmentalized the documents for readability, in contrast to the paragraph formatting of the previous Charter.
- **Charter changes:**
 - Streamlined the document to explain who we are and why we are.
 - Separated the previous Article II: Authority and Responsibility to Article II: Authority and Article III: Responsibility. Under Article III, a semi-annual report to the President of the University was specified instead of an annual report.
 - Eliminated the use of the term “CoR” (Council of Representatives), and distinguished members as “voting” and “non-voting.” Article IV: Membership reflects this change in terminology but otherwise was not changed.
 - Described officer duties in Article V and makes it the responsibility of the Vice President for Operations to review the Bylaws every year and the Charter every other year, in non-Activity Fee setting years.
 - Described procedures for calling meetings, proposing agenda items and resolutions, and removing officers from duty in Article VII.
 - Established Bylaws in Article VIII.
 - Described the authority of the GPSA to set the Activity Fee in Article IX, and the process by which it is set. Established the GPSA Byline Allocation Procedures and GPSA Eligibility Criteria and Obligations for Byline Funded Organizations. These two documents were separated for ease of review and distribution.
 - Outlined Charter and Bylaws amendment procedures in Article XI. Content remained unchanged, except for separating the Charter and Bylaws.
- **GPSA Bylaws:**
 - Separated from the Charter to explain what we do and how we do it, specifically in terms of internal committee functioning. Many points taken from the previous Charter Article 9: Standing Committees – Specific.
- **GPSA Byline Allocation Procedures:**
 - Clarified procedures of groups applying for Activity Fee byline funding, including procedures for groups whose initial request is rejected.
 - Included a procedure to satisfy the balance requirement of 35% to the GPSAFC. The 35% to the GPSAFC is not new, but the procedure of increasing the fee by \$2 increments, if necessary to reach 35%, is new.
- **GPSA Eligibility Criteria and Obligations for Byline Funded Organizations:**
 - Simplified the presentation requirement for Byline Funded Organizations.
 - Changed the signature request of University Organizations seeking Byline Funding for the first time from 15% to 10% of the graduate and professional

student population. The 10% requirement is consistent with the 10% requirement of Independent Organizations.

Article XI reflects formatting changes to explain that the President of the University must now approve changes to Articles II, III, IV, and XI of the GPSA Charter; nonetheless all four documents are presented in their entirety with this report for review and feedback.

III. Other Actions, Activities, and the Year to Come

Actions: We continued to follow-up on actions from the fall semester. The Student Advocacy Committee maintained communication with Gannett administrators on health care (R.1) and mental health (R.6) services. Members of the Executive Committee continued to follow-up with Campus Life on graduate and professional student housing (R.2) and served on the Campus Life Master Plan committees for housing and dining. We succeeded in the request of R.3 and are happy to announce that, next year, in cooperation with the Graduate School, the GPSAINFO e-newsletter will be sent to all graduate students registered with the Graduate School. Students in the Johnson business, Law, and Veterinary professional schools will receive the newsletter separately via their professional school.

Activities: The Student Advocacy Committee held a Town Hall Meeting at the end of March in the Big Red Barn to garner comments on quality of life issues from graduate and professional students. Feedback ranged from transportation to health care to library services. The Committee has contacted respective departments on this feedback and plans to hold a Town Hall Meeting every year.

The fifth annual Grad Ball was held in Willard Straight Hall at the end of April. As in years passed, capacity was reached at 500 attendants, with tickets selling out days before the event. Kudos go to the Events Committee for their successful event!

Year to Come: In our last business meeting, the GPSA passed the 2009-2010 meeting calendar and elected a new slate of officers. The new officers will begin their terms on June 1, 2009. We celebrated the end of the year with an awards celebration where we acknowledged the outstanding volunteer efforts of GPSA officers, members, and committee representatives.

As mentioned in the Mid-Year Report, the GPSA will host the Ivy Summit Leadership Conference October 9-11, 2009. This conference brings together graduate and professional student governance groups from the Ivy League. Planning is already well-underway, and an ad-hoc committee has been formed to continue planning over the summer. We are eager for this opportunity to showcase Cornell to the other Ivies, but invitations have also been extended to our fellow Cornellians at the Geneva Agricultural Experiment Station and the Weill Medical College in NYC. We look forward to this opportunity for inter-campus collaboration, and we hope that all administrations will share in our enthusiasm and support us in our efforts.

Finally, it goes without saying that the 2008-2009 academic year was a challenging year, especially in consideration of the difficult economic situation. Despite the challenges – or perhaps in light of them – the people of Cornell University came together as the Cornell

Community. In regard to the Assemblies, I think the same could be said. Within ourselves and among ourselves, we came together to work on cooperative efforts and goals. I wish to thank the Office of Assemblies, campus administrators, members and leaders of the Assemblies, and members and leaders of the GPSA for their dedication to their work, to one another, and to Cornell.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Leinfelder
Out-going GPSA President